The Hunger Free

COMMUNITY COALITION HANDBOOK

Effective Strategies to End Hunger

Baylor University
COLLABORATIVE ON HUNGER AND POVERTY

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Purpose and Suggested Use of this Guide

Since 2009, the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty has launched numerous Hunger Free Community Coalitions and provided technical assistance to coalitions across the United States. This handbook reflects the Baylor Collaborative's years of experience alongside communities, bringing sectors together to alleviate food insecurity. With this resource, communities can build and sustain an action-oriented network of multisectoral partners, and established coalitions can use this material for growth and sustainability. While this handbook is useful on its own, the Baylor Collaborative encourages you to complete the companion *Hunger Free Communities Certificate Course* to deepen your understanding through guided practice and interactive learning.

This handbook was primarily organized and compiled by the Baylor Collaborative team of Katie Nye, MSSW, Director of the Hunger Free Community Accelerator; Jill Hatcher, MTh, Senior Director of Public Service and Innovation; Jeremy Everett, DMin, Executive Director; and Grace Norman, MPA, Chief of Staff and Senior Director of Public Affairs. Significant content and design support was provided from Tasha Roberts, JD, Director of Public Affairs; Marcus Franklin, MSEd, Marketing & Communications Specialist; Katherine Best, LMSW, Program Coordinator; Kayelee Arensman, LMSW/MDiv, Program Coordinator; and other members of the Baylor Collaborative staff, both past and present.

About the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty

The Baylor Collaborative envisions a world without hunger through mission-driven, scalable solutions to end hunger. To achieve this, we aim to advance food security by becoming a leading contributor to the landscape of hunger research, promoting the adoption of proven and effective interventions, and advocating for evidence-based approaches and policies.

For up-to-date information about the Baylor Collaborative, follow us on social media.

Facebook and Instagram: @BaylorCollaborative
LinkedIn: @Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As part of Baylor University—a nationally ranked, private Christian Research 1 institution—we must confront the Biblical evidence that God consistently sides with the poor, the hungry, the stranger, and the marginalized. From Genesis to Revelation, God's preferential care for those with their "backs against the wall," as Howard Thurman put it, or "members of his family," as Jesus said, is unmistakable. Whether it's a hungry child, a jobless parent, or a lonely older adult, these are the people to whom Jesus brought the good news. A community rooted in the image of God and committed to meeting each other's needs embodies the Kingdom of God through love and care. Alleviating hunger, then, is not only an act of compassion—it is a lived expression of our Christian faith. This handbook reflects that calling.

This publication would not be possible without the contributions of the expert staff and faculty members who have been part of our team over the past several years. Their field work, research, and bright minds have contributed to the development of the Hunger Free Community Coalition Network and the first toolkit, published in 2018, when our organization was named the Texas Hunger Initiative.

We would especially like to thank the following individuals: Dr. Cara Cliburn Allen, Kayelee Arensman, Kaiser Arnhart, Kasey Ashenfelter, Katherine Best, Bella Burns, Miah Carter, Dr. Jeremy Everett, Marcus Franklin, Debra Franco, Keisha Givens, Dr. Craig Gundersen, Rachel Harrison, Jill Hatcher, Courtney Haworth, Wyonella Henderson-Greene, Mary Herbert, Megan Hoag, Marc Jacobson, Dr. Lori Kanitz, Dr. Kathy Krey, Doug McDurham, Craig Nash, Catherine Nicholson, Dr. Erin Nolen, Grace Norman, Katie Nye, Callie Myers Price, John Puder, Tasha Roberts, Codie Robinson, Elijah Tanner, Betty Teston, Gale Norman, and Carol Tyler.

Furthermore, we give thanks for the communities that have welcomed us and grown alongside us over these many years. These communities placed their trust in us and are an integral part of our Texas-sized Test Kitchen.

- Abilene Hunger Coalition
- Bell County Hunger Coalition
- Dallas Coalition for Hunger Solutions
- Hill Country Hunger Alliance
- Hometown Food Security Project Mower County, Minnesota
- Hunger Free Coalition of Brazoria County
- Hunger Free Communities – Brazos County
- Hunger Free Kansas
- Hunger Free Oklahoma
- Johnson County Texas Hunger Coalition
- LOVE Kendall County Kids
- McCulloch County Hunger Coalition
- McLennan County Hunger Coalition
- Medical Health Advisory Committee
- Nourish Coalition – Bastrop County
- South Plains Hunger Solutions
- Southeast Texas Hunger Free Community Coalition
- Tarrant County Food Policy Council
- Tom Green County Hunger Coalition
- Washington County Food Security Network

FOREWORD

Hunger impacts every community. In cities, small towns, and rural communities, families are forced to make difficult choices, such as whether to pay their electric bill or buy groceries each month. Fortunately, in those same communities, nonprofit organizations, school districts, local governments, private businesses, and community leaders are working to make sure every household has access to the food they need to thrive.

The Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty is committed to solving the complex problem of hunger and working alongside communities to achieve lasting change through:

- Eliminating siloed efforts across public and private sectors, humanitarian organizations, local actors, and academia.
- Creating multisectoral collaboration, resulting in coordinated services, shared responsibility for equitable outcomes, and increased awareness of food insecurity.
- Contributing to effective strategies which impact those most affected by food insecurity, including people of color, seniors, children, recently incarcerated individuals, disabled persons, and those living in rural communities.

Working closely with communities for more than 16 years, the Baylor Collaborative has honed the Hunger Free Community Coalition model to bring about long-term, sustainable change.

The Baylor Collaborative is excited to share this handbook, a companion tool for the *Hunger Free Communities Certificate Course* offered through Baylor University, to help communities create more just food access for all.

Jeremy K. Everett, DMin
Executive Director
Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty

INTRODUCTION

When Hurricane Katrina made landfall in August 2005, Dr. Jeremy Everett, the future founder and executive director of the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty, managed a medical needs shelter for hurricane evacuees on the south side of San Antonio, Texas. As the shelter cared for the traumatized arrivals, attempting to coordinate scarce medical resources and meet their basic needs, Dr. Everett encountered the crushing chaos that accompanies an unorganized response to disaster. "The first responders…all spoke different work languages. No one knew who was in charge or how to give directions. Evacuations were directionless, shelters were overcrowded, medication was inadequate, and volunteers were disorganized. Everything was a mess, and what we desperately needed was a coordinated response."[1]

The lessons learned during Hurricane Katrina revealed the gaping need for a coordinated disaster response. Fortunately, federal and state agencies heeded the call. Since 2005, federal agencies have developed training, written manuals, and created a plan that allows communities to respond efficiently when disaster strikes. Even though the work of recovery is still exhausting and requires an "all hands on deck" approach, a coordinated response makes all the difference.[2]

Similarly, the problem of hunger is too large and complex to address alone. In 2023, 18 million U.S. households experienced uncertainty about regular access to meals at some point in the year.[3] In the modern American context, hunger is not about famine or a lack of production but about a lack of concerted efforts to ensure people have access to food.[4] In many communities, multiple organizations work to provide relief to these families and individuals. These organizations include local food pantries, school districts serving free and reduced-price meals, or grocers providing access to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). However, frequently, these organizations work in silos, often serving the same families without a coordinated approach to the complex problem of hunger. To impact hunger in our communities, we need a coordinated response.

This is where Hunger Free Community Coalitions (HFCCs) come into play. HFCCs leverage the collective impact of all parties in a community or region—including the public and private sectors, humanitarian organizations, and academia—to maximize impact with efficiency. This allows families and individuals to become more food secure. By bringing everyone to the same table, communities can act together to assess the local food system, identify resources and gaps, make decisions for change, and implement action plans to ensure their neighbors have access to healthy food.

Getting the Most from This Handbook

This handbook begins by explaining the fundamentals of food insecurity—how it is defined and who it affects. It then introduces Hunger Free Community Coalitions and explores how they harness the three pillars of collective impact, shared power, and multisectoral collaboration to address hunger. Finally, it walks you through the five phases of building a coalition, from establishing a shared vision to

implementing a strategic plan. Along the way, you will develop tools to research hunger in your community, understand federal nutrition and charitable food programs, and engage policymakers in evidence-based solutions.

Throughout this handbook, you will be directed to its companion, *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*. The workbook contains individual and group exercises, helpful templates, and reflection questions, so you can practice your new skills and translate knowledge to action.

This handbook may be used as a standalone tool, but it is designed to be a companion to the *Hunger Free Communities Certificate Course* offered through Baylor University, where interactive lessons and guided practice will take your learning even further.

In 2018, the Baylor Collaborative (then known as the Texas Hunger Initiative) released *A Toolkit for Developing and Strengthening Hunger Free Community Coalitions*, its first published effort to help communities learn how to build and sustain Hunger Free Community Coalitions.[5] Many of the ideas and exercises in this handbook and *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook* originated in that first toolkit and are carried forward and expanded upon here.

Finally, this handbook reflects the most recent data available at the time of writing. However, given the rapid pace of change, the Baylor Collaborative encourages you to consult the latest research trends.

Thank you for your commitment to a coordinated response to hunger in your community. With more than 16 years of experience supporting communities committed to ending hunger, the Baylor Collaborative is honored to walk alongside you on this journey.

UNDERSTANDING FOOD INSECURITY

CHAPTER 1

In 2023, 18 million U.S. households experienced uncertainty about where their next meal would come from at some point in the year.[6]

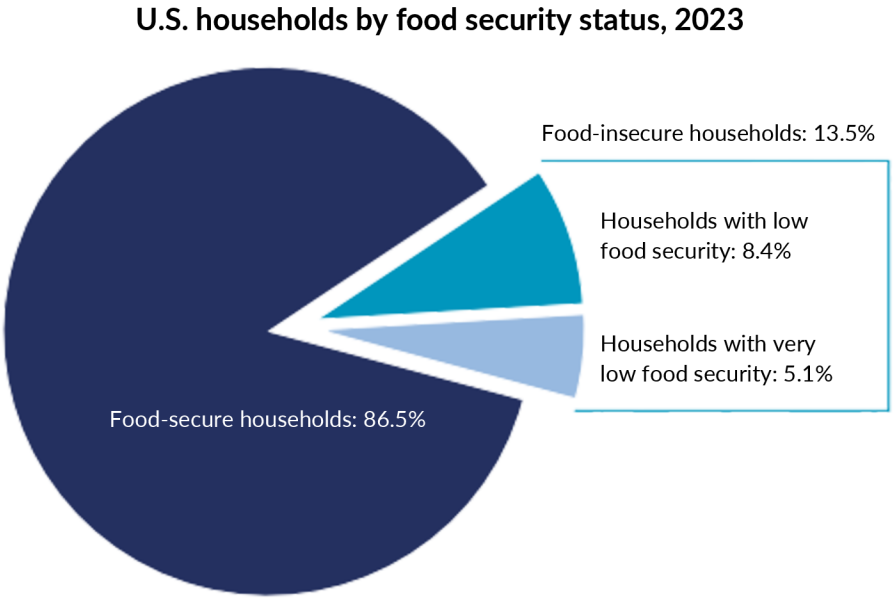

U.S. households by food security status, 2023
Food-insecure households: 13.5%
Households with low food security: 8.4%
Households with very low food security: 5.1%
Food-secure households: 86.5%

Figure 1: USDA, Economic Research Service using U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2023 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement data.

Food insecurity is on the rise in the United States, with the percentage of households affected approaching levels not seen since the Great Recession of 2008.[7] In 2023, 13.5 percent of U.S. households—an estimated 18 million—experienced food insecurity, a significant increase from 12.8 percent in 2022 and 10.2 percent in 2021.[8] These numbers reflect a troubling trend and underscore the rising challenges millions of Americans face in securing consistent access to nutritious food.

Trends in the prevalence of food insecurity and very low food security in U.S. households, 2001-23

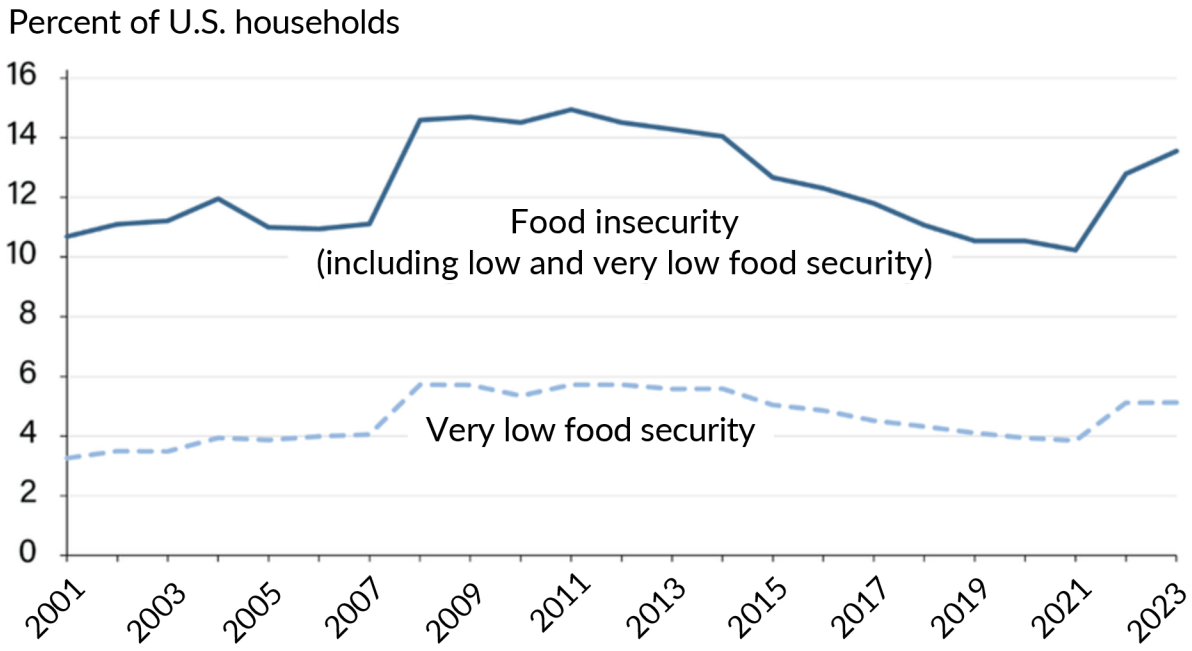


Figure 2: USDA Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements.

Food insecurity is not merely about having too little to eat; it is a complex, systemic issue rooted in interconnected social and economic conditions. While poverty and income-related factors are among the most significant drivers, they do not operate in isolation. Within the United States, food insecurity is deeply intertwined with age, health challenges, household characteristics, immigration and incarceration status, addiction, and systemic discrimination.[9, 10, 11]

In 2020, nearly 29 percent of low-income households were food insecure—almost three times the national average.[12] This disparity reveals hunger in America is not just a problem of individual hardship, but a reflection of broader structural inequities.

Understanding food insecurity and its drivers is the first step toward lasting solutions. This chapter defines key terms, reviews data trends, and examines who is most affected, laying the groundwork for the coordinated, community-driven response outlined in the chapters ahead.

To take a closer look at food insecurity data in your community, complete Exercise 1.1 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*. You will learn more about exploring and understanding food insecurity data in Chapter 4, Understanding Your Community.

Defining Food Insecurity

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as **"the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways."**[13] Although often used interchangeably, food insecurity differs from hunger and other commonly used terms. The following terms appear frequently throughout this handbook:

- **Food Security:** Food security for a household means access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.[14]
- **Food Insecurity:** A household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate and safe foods, or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.[15]
- **Hunger:** An individual-level physiological condition that may result from food insecurity.[16]
- **Nutrition Security:** Consistent access, availability, and affordability of foods and beverages that promote well-being, prevent disease, and, if needed, treat disease, particularly among racial/ethnic minority populations, lower income populations, and rural and remote populations.[17]

Four Ranges of Food Security

In 2006, the USDA began measuring food security as a continuum divided into four ranges[18], evaluated through a series of questions about behaviors and experiences associated with difficulties meeting food needs.[19]

High food security: Households had no problems, or anxiety about, consistently accessing adequate food.

Marginal food security: Households had problems at times, or anxiety about, accessing adequate food, but the quality, variety, and quantity of their food intake were not substantially reduced.

Low food security: Households reduced the quality, variety, and desirability of their diets, but the quantity of food intake and normal eating patterns were not substantially disrupted.

Very low food security: At times during the year, eating patterns of one or more household members were disrupted and food intake reduced because the household lacked money and other resources for food.

Typically, households experiencing high food security or marginal food security are described as food secure, while households experiencing low or very low food security are identified as food insecure.

Understanding Nutrition Security

Nutrition security, as defined by the USDA, is the "consistent access, availability, and affordability of foods and beverages that promote well-being, prevent disease, and, if needed, treat disease...[p]articularly among racial/ethnic minority populations, lower income populations, and rural and remote populations."[20] Nutrition security expands on the concept of food security by recognizing Americans often lack active and healthy lifestyles. The concept also emphasizes viewing food security in a way that ensures resources are available to help all populations, including those disproportionately experiencing food insecurity. Interventions aimed at increasing nutrition security often address food-related health issues, such as diabetes, prediabetes, and obesity.

To further explore and understand these definitions, complete Exercise 1.2 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook.*

Drivers of Food Insecurity

Every population, every county, and every community experiences hunger.[21] While the root causes vary, food insecurity is often intensified by underlying factors that increase risk. This section highlights key factors that may be most helpful for Hunger Free Community Coalitions to understand hunger in local contexts, though it is not an exhaustive review.

Temporary or Unexpected Crises

Food insecurity can impact those who have consistent income and affordable housing. Temporary setbacks such as job loss, medical emergencies, or natural disasters often create significantly reduced access to food until circumstances change.

Race and Ethnicity

Food insecurity in the United States disproportionately affects households based on race and ethnicity. Between 2016 and 2021, data from the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) revealed significant disparities among different racial and ethnic groups.[22] As Figure 3 illustrates, American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) households experienced the highest rates of food insecurity at 23.3 percent, nearly three times the rate of white households. Black households faced a food insecurity rate of 21 percent, more than double that of white households. Hispanic and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander households also reported food insecurity rates significantly higher than the national average (16.9 and 15.4 percent, respectively). In contrast, white households report a food insecurity rate of 8 percent, below the national average, and Asian households report the lowest food insecurity rate of 5.4 percent.[23] As Figure 4 demonstrates, these disparities are also significant in households with children.[24]

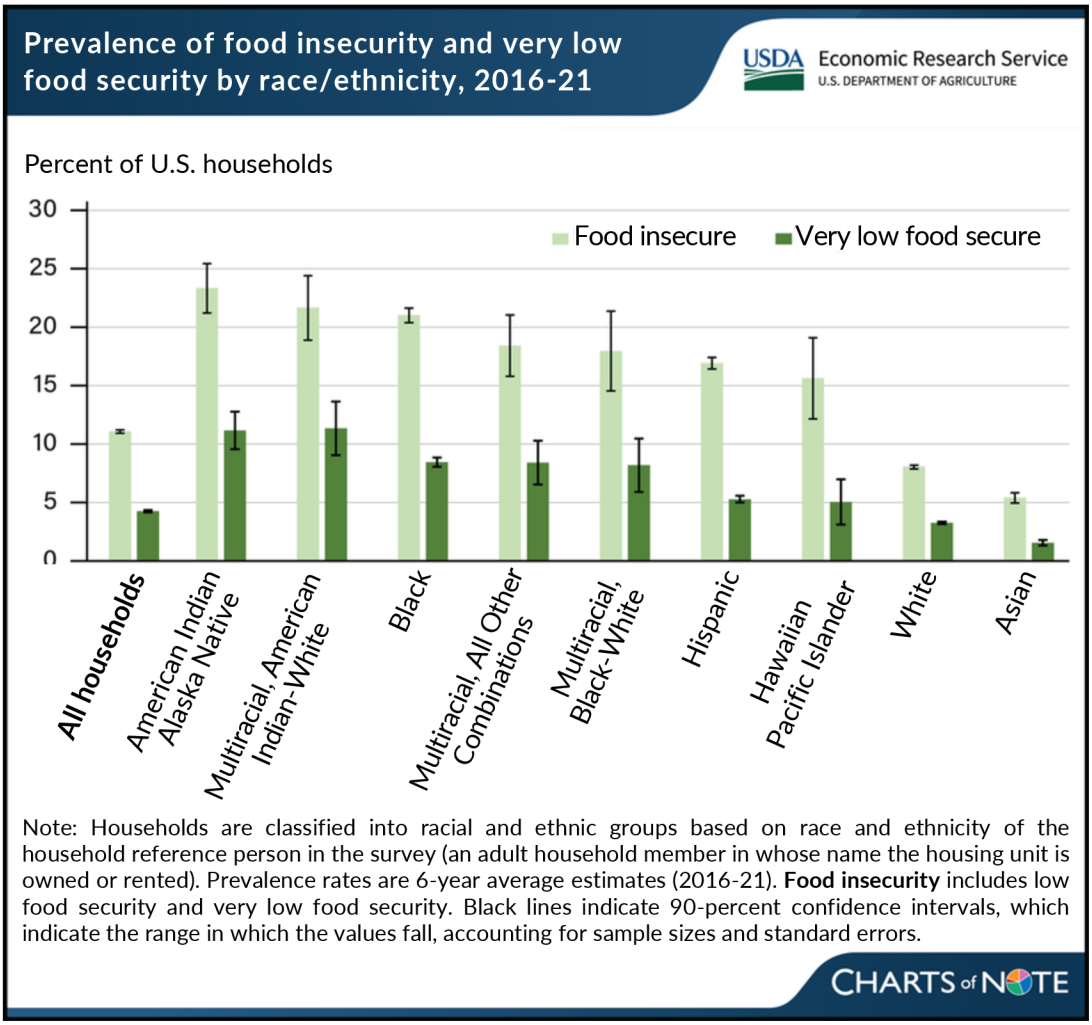

Prevalence of food insecurity and very low food security by race/ethnicity, 2016-21
USDA Economic Research Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Percent of U.S. households
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
Food insecure
Very low food secure
All households
American Indian Alaska Native
Multiracial, American Indian-White
Black
Multiracial, All Other Combinations
Multiracial, Black-White
Hispanic
Hawaiian Pacific Islander
White
Asian
Note: Households are classified into racial and ethnic groups based on race and ethnicity of the household reference person in the survey (an adult household member in whose name the housing unit is owned or rented). Prevalence rates are 6-year average estimates (2016-21). Food insecurity includes low food security and very low food security. Black lines indicate 90-percent confidence intervals, which indicate the range in which the values fall, accounting for sample sizes and standard errors.
CHARTS of NOTE

Figure 3: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2016-21 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements.

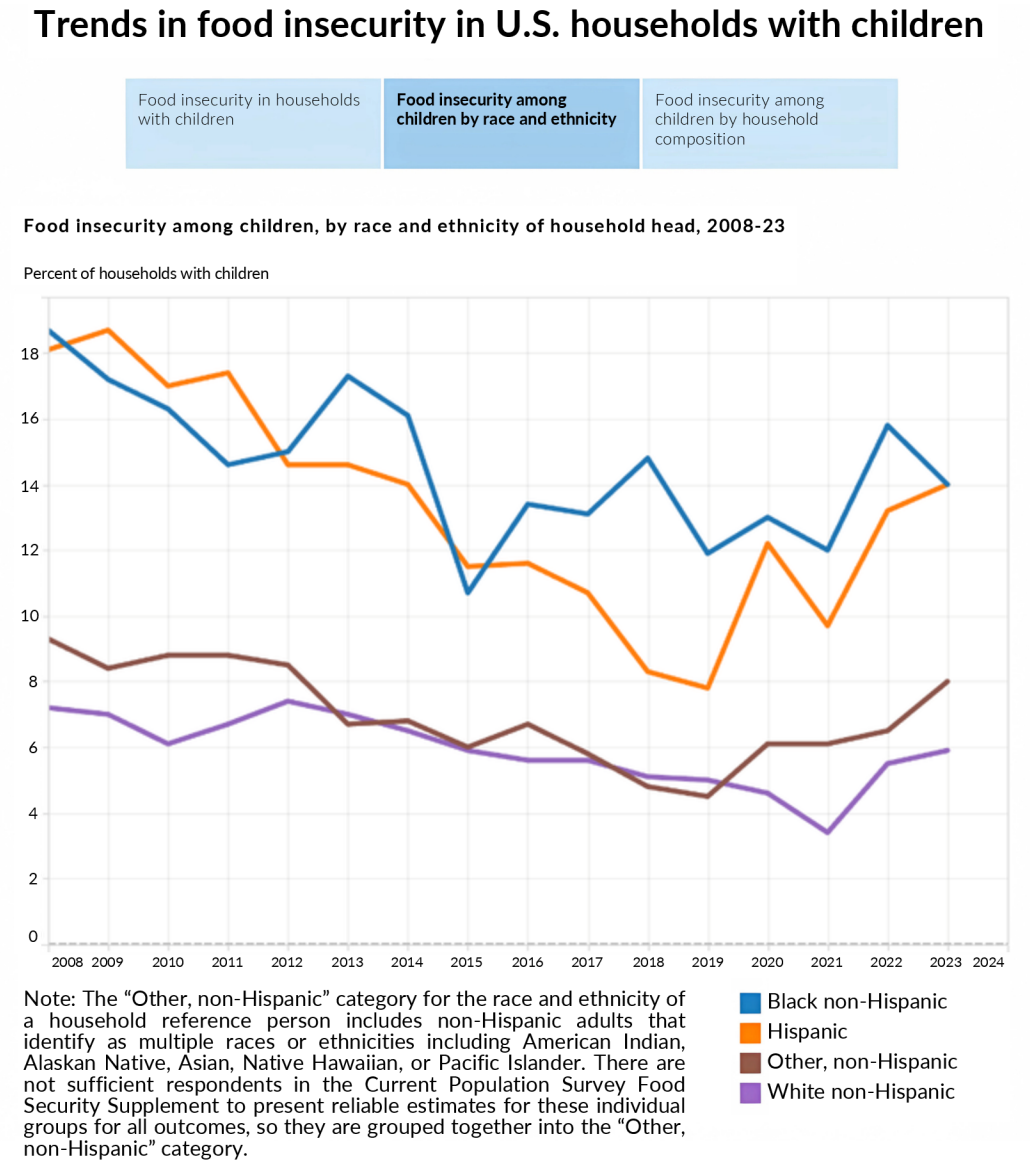

Trends in food insecurity in U.S. households with children
Food insecurity in households with children
Food insecurity among children by race and ethnicity
Food insecurity among children by household composition
Food insecurity among children, by race and ethnicity of household head, 2008-23
Percent of households with children
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024
Note: The "Other, non-Hispanic" category for the race and ethnicity of a household reference person includes non-Hispanic adults that identify as multiple races or ethnicities including American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander. There are not sufficient respondents in the Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement to present reliable estimates for these individual groups for all outcomes, so they are grouped together into the "Other, non-Hispanic" category.
Black non-Hispanic
Hispanic
Other, non-Hispanic
White non-Hispanic

Figure 4: USDA, Economic Research Service using U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements.

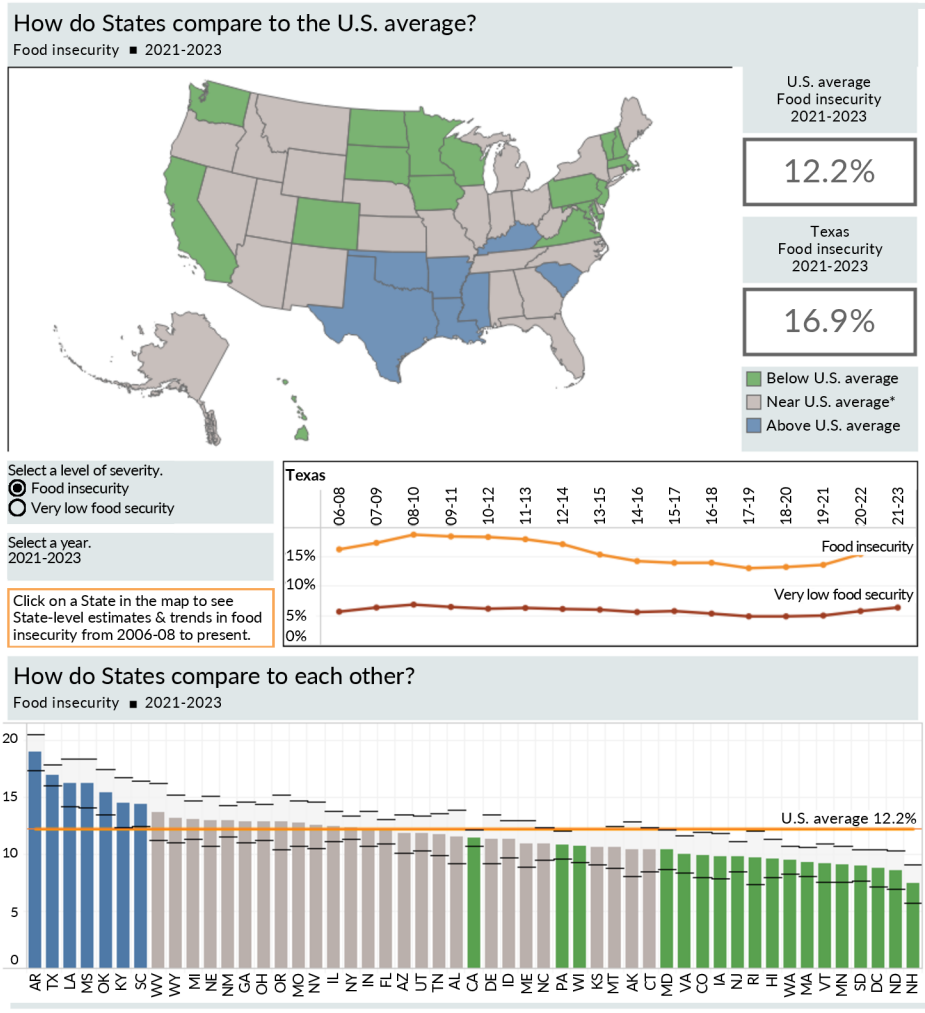
Individual and Household Characteristics

Individual and household characteristics are linked to increased risk of food insecurity. Households with children, single parents, or veterans may be more likely to experience food insecurity.[25] Children, seniors, and underemployed or unemployed individuals also experience food insecurity at higher rates.[26] Additionally, disabled individuals are more likely to experience food insecurity.[27, 28]

Geography

Households in rural communities and those living in the southern region of the United States also experience a higher likelihood of food insecurity.[29]

Neighborhood conditions also correlate with food insecurity rates. Households in neighborhoods with low food access, poverty, and substandard housing have a higher rate of food insecurity than their counterparts.[30] Likewise, the household risk of food insecurity is impacted by the cost of living.[31]


How do States compare to the U.S. average?
Food insecurity ■ 2021-2023
U.S. average Food insecurity 2021-2023
12.2%
Texas Food insecurity 2021-2023
16.9%
Below U.S. average
Near U.S. average*
Above U.S. average
Select a level of severity.
Food insecurity
Very low food security
Select a year. 2021-2023
Click on a State in the map to see State-level estimates & trends in food insecurity from 2006-08 to present.
Texas
06-08 07-09 08-10 09-11 10-12 11-13 12-14 13-15 14-16 15-17 16-18 17-19 18-20 19-21 20-22 21-23
15%
10%
5%
0%
Food insecurity
Very low food security
How do States compare to each other?
Food insecurity ■ 2021-2023
20
15
10
5
0
U.S. average 12.2%
AR TX LA MS OK KY SC WV WY MI NE NM GA OH OR MO NV IL NY IN FL AZ UT TN AL CA DE ID ME NC PA WI KS MT AK CT MD VA CO IA NJ RI HI WA MA VT MN SD DC ND NH

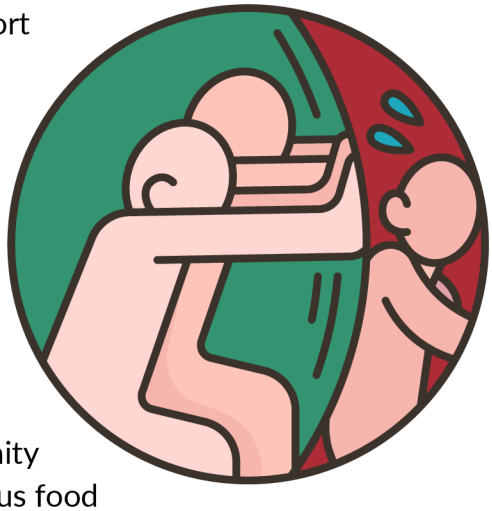
State Prevalence rates are given with a 90-percent confidence interval (black lines) with the U.S. national average (orange line) for reference. The 90-percent confidence intervals represent a range of values which are likely to include the actual food insecurity rate for each State and are calculated using the margins of error for the State prevalence rates. The margin of error reflects sampling variation--the uncertainty associated with estimates that are based on information from a limited number of households in each State. For this reason, margins of error should be taken into consideration when interpreting these statistics and especially when comparing rates across States. Prevalence rates for 3 years are averaged to provide more reliable statistics at the State level.

*States that are categorized as Near U.S. average have prevalence rates that are not statistically significantly different from the U.S. average.

Figure 5: USDA, Economic Research Service using U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements.

Systemic Discrimination

Some U.S. populations experience food insecurity at disproportionately higher rates due to systemic discrimination, such as racism, ableism, and anti-LGBTQIA+ bias.[32, 33, 34] For example, the disabled community may face food insecurity due to multiple access barriers, such as transportation, stable employment, and sufficient support for purchasing nutritious foods.[35, 36]



Food insecurity is shaped by a range of interconnected drivers, including temporary or unexpected crises, race and ethnicity, individual and household characteristics, geography, and systemic discrimination. These factors often intersect and compound, creating complex and persistent barriers for many individuals and families. Understanding this complexity is essential to developing effective, equitable solutions. While no single strategy can address every driver, a coordinated community response ensures everyone can consistently access the nutritious food they need to live healthy, dignified lives.

Individual and Collective Consequences of Food and Nutrition Insecurity

Food insecurity impacts not only individuals, but entire communities. Over the long term, its widespread consequences ripple across multiple sectors—affecting health outcomes, educational achievement, workforce stability, and the overall economy.

Health

Food insecurity compromises the overall health of individuals no matter their age. Lack of consistent, nutritious food is connected to higher healthcare utilization and expenditures, including increased emergency department visits, inpatient admissions, and longer hospital stays. Those with chronic diseases, particularly diabetes, experience a higher rate of food insecurity.[37, 38] In 2016, food insecurity connected to approximately $52.9 billion in excess healthcare expenditures in the U.S.[39]

Education

Children in food-insecure households face increased risks to their mental health, cognitive development, and overall wellbeing.[40] The negative impact on children's learning and productivity results in reduced academic performance, developmental delays, and the tendency to fall behind.[41] The long-term effects on children become evident as they enter adulthood unprepared—emotionally, socially, educationally, and even physically—for the demands of work.[42]

Workforce and Economy

Food insecurity takes a significant toll on individual physical health, which in turn weakens the workforce and economy. Health-related absences reduce workplace productivity, while individuals facing chronic food insecurity often experience diminished lifetime earnings and a greater risk of poverty in old age.[43, 44] On a broader scale, these challenges contribute to increased healthcare costs, reduced workforce productivity, and diminished business competitiveness.[45]

To more fully understand the experiences of households facing hunger, complete Exercise 1.3 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*.

Conclusion

Food insecurity in America goes beyond access to food; it reflects deeply rooted systemic barriers tied to poverty, race, health, geography, and opportunity. Its ripple effects are profound, undermining health, education, and economic stability. In response, Hunger Free Community Coalitions across the country are advancing innovative, data-driven, and community-centered strategies to ensure reliable access to nutritious food. This work demands collaboration, creativity, and long-term commitment. Through collective action, communities can shift from places where hunger persists to places where hope thrives and everyone has the opportunity to flourish.

At the end of each chapter, you will have an opportunity to reflect on what you learned. Turn to Exercise 1.4 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook* to respond to reflection questions and record your own thoughts.

UNDERSTANDING HUNGER FREE COMMUNITY COALITIONS

CHAPTER 2

Before you begin Chapter 2, review what you learned in Chapter 1 by completing Exercise 2.1 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*.

Efforts to reduce food insecurity require a response exceeding the capabilities and resources of any single individual or organization. However, even when a diverse constellation of stakeholders joins together to strengthen food security, their efforts often remain siloed, each working on autonomous projects independently funded, designed, and evaluated for success.

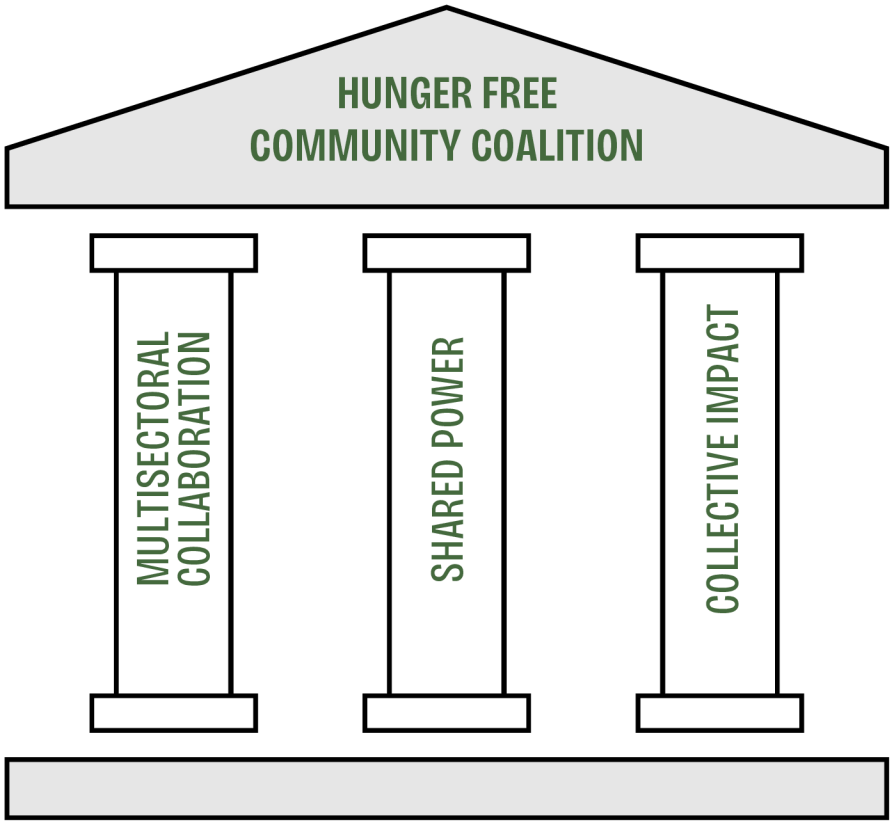
Hunger Free Community Coalitions (HFCCs) leverage the collective impact of all parties in a community or region – including the public and private sectors, humanitarian organizations, faith-based organizations, and academia. This allows families and individuals access to resources that enhance food and nutrition security.

A Hunger Free Community Coalition is a group of diverse organizations and individuals acting together to end hunger in a community.

Hunger Free Community Coalitions are typically formed by the initial efforts of a committed, local community partner—an individual, a group of individuals, or an organization. Once formed, coalitions strategically assess the structure and procedures of local food delivery systems, identify resources and gaps, make decisions for change, and implement action plans to ensure access to nutritious food. Highly effective coalitions seek to advance food security collaboratively. By learning together, aligning goals, and integrating actions to achieve both community and systems-level change, Hunger Free Community Coalitions lay the foundation for success.

The Baylor Collaborative's HFCC Approach

The Baylor Collaborative's Hunger Free Community Coalition (HFCC) approach is based on three key pillars—**multisectoral collaboration**, **shared power,** and **collective impact**. These pillars serve as the foundation from which a healthy coalition can develop effective solutions, strengthening community resilience and reducing food insecurity.



Pillar #1: Multisectoral Collaboration

Diverse sectors working together for a common cause (e.g., corporations, community groups, governments, nonprofits, educational entities).

Pillar #2: Shared Power

Locates power within the lowest appropriate entities both across and within organizations and creates the environment for this shared power to be used to develop effective and legitimate solutions.[46]

Pillar #3: Collective Impact

The commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem.[47]

Multisectoral Collaboration

By design, resilient coalitions bring together a diverse group of organizations and individuals representing different sectors of the community. By combining this varied set of resources, skills, and expertise, coalitions can ensure broad community ownership. The exact mix and representation in each coalition varies by community; however, highly effective coalitions include community members who have experienced and/or are experiencing food insecurity. Strong coalition leadership represents multiple sectors (nonprofits, corporate partners, education, faith-based organizations, local government, individual community leaders, etc.), ensuring **multisectoral collaboration**.

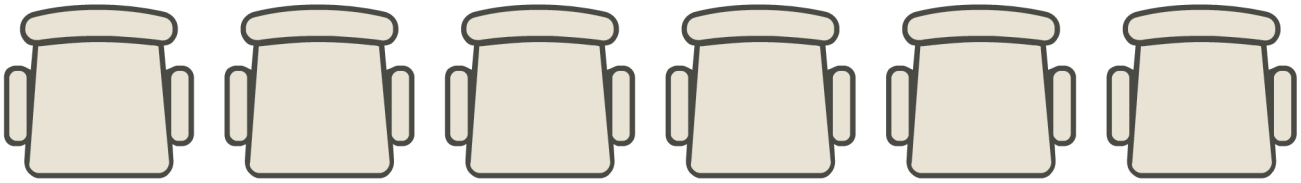
Each coalition is unique in number of members and makeup. Coalition leadership and membership should genuinely reflect all parts of the community. By design, leaders of the coalition should take care to seek out representatives from groups of all sizes and roles within the community.

Examples of individuals, organizations, and sectors often part of HFCCs include:

- People experiencing or who have experienced food insecurity within the community
- Food banks, food pantries, and other food relief organizations
- Nonprofit service agencies
- Faith-based groups and faith communities
- Schools and school districts
- Universities, technical schools, and colleges
- Local government
- Elected officials
- Corporations and local businesses
- Hospitals and clinics
- Diverse community volunteers

Coalitions may be statewide, regional, county-wide, city-wide, or even zip code focused.

The community and its stakeholders determine the geographic scope.



all people, organizations, and sectors

Shared Power

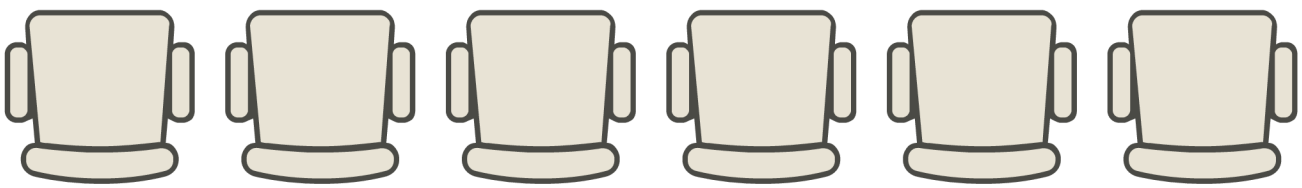
Shared power means all people, organizations, or sectors have a seat at the table when decisions are being made about how best to tackle a social problem. As a result, all community members, no matter their rank or status, can be a contributing voice to, and a shaping influence on, decision making that will directly affect them.

Shared power approaches have two common features wherever they are enacted: (1) "[T]hey locate power within the lowest appropriate entities both across and within organizations…, and (2) they create the environment for shared power to be used to develop effective and legitimate solutions."[48]

The Shared Power Principle inverts the typical model of social or institutional change, where those in authority or power instigate change. "Instead of 'pushing information to authority,' [it] is about pushing authority to information.' This means putting decision-making power into the hands of people or organizations with the greatest knowledge of an issue and helping them exercise this power as effectively as possible."[49] These may often be members of a community who lack traditional sources of power (e.g., wealth, education, positional power) but have a wealth of intangible resources, insight, and wisdom such as lived experience, historical knowledge of the community, and trust forged through long-standing relationships.

Further, while some theories propose traditional notions of power as a limited asset to be competed for and protected (e.g., "If you get power, I lose power"), the Shared Power Principle sees power not as a fixed and static commodity to be bartered over but creative and generative when shared. Therefore, shared power can amplify a community's diverse assets. When collectively employed, these assets can have an effect far greater than the sum of their parts.

have a seat at the table



Collective Impact

Collective impact provides what could be the greatest opportunity for tackling complex issues and bringing about both short-term and long-term systems change. Rather than pitting one group over another, it brings communities together to accomplish goals its various constituencies could not achieve in isolation.

Collective impact initiatives differ from basic collaboration in that they involve "long-term commitments by a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem."[50] Further, rather than collaborating on a single initiative operating in isolation, a collective impact initiative is grounded by five crucial components essential to achieving sustainable, lasting change.

Components of Collective Impact

- **Develop a common agenda**: Participants collectively define the problem and create a shared vision to solve it.[51]
- **Agree upon a shared measurement system**: Participants determine together how progress will be measured and reported, allowing for continuous learning and accountability.[52]
- **Engage in mutually reinforcing activities**: Though participants prioritize different tasks based on diverse skill sets, they do so in mutually reinforcing ways all aimed at a common goal.[53]
- **Create avenues for continuous communication**: Multisectoral collaboration requires time to build trust. Therefore, regular and structured avenues for communication are needed to create trust and strengthen relationships.[54]
- **Develop an administrative backbone**: Participants engaging in collective impact need to be supported by a team dedicated to aligning and coordinating the work of the group.[55]

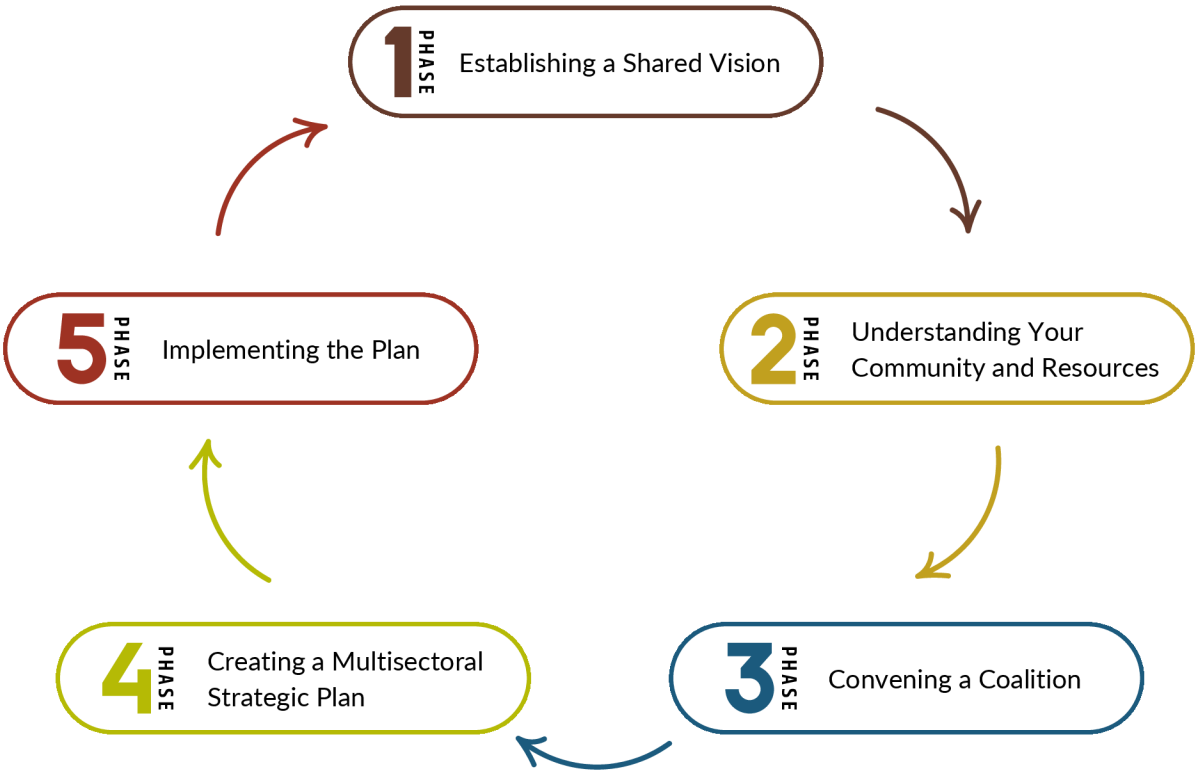
To consider how your coalition can understand and incorporate these three pillars into your own Hunger Free Community Coalition, complete Exercise 2.2 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook.*

Building a Hunger Free Community Coalition

Over the last 16 years, the Baylor Collaborative honed its approach by carefully implementing five critical phases of coalition development. These steps are informed by the three pillars of multisectoral collaboration, shared power, and collective impact. In each community, these phases bring about impactful work unique to each setting.

In the Baylor Collaborative's approach to building and sustaining an HFCC, each phase builds on the phase prior. Even so, this organic process requires continuous learning. Therefore, it is important to remember these phases are iterative and should be repeated as necessary to respond to the changing needs of the community.

This handbook leads communities through the Baylor Collaborative's five phases of creating an HFCC. These phases reflect the five collective impact components firmly situated within the context of shared power and multisectoral collaboration: (1) Establishing a Shared Vision; (2) Understanding Your Community and Resources; (3) Convening a Coalition; (4) Creating a Multisectoral Strategic Plan; (5) and Implementing the Plan, utilizing evidence-based interventions designed to increase food security in the community.



Nine Healthy Habits of a Successful Coalition

As HFCCs form, intentionally developing healthy habits from the outset will build trust and foster collaboration for future work.

The Nine Healthy Habits of a Successful Coalition, adapted from the *Nine Habits of Successful Comprehensive Cancer Control Coalitions*[56], serve as a guide for those committed to building a healthy, sustainable coalition.

These nine habits offer a blueprint for cultivating effective, inclusive, and sustainable coalitions. The first habit, **Empowering Leadership**, ensures leaders are listening to and accurately representing the needs and opinions of members. **Shared Decision Making**, the second habit, welcomes and seeks diverse ideas. **Value-added Collaboration** encourages members to embrace the idea that the whole is better than its parts. Prioritizing **Dedicated Staff** helps coalitions function effectively despite most members' voluntary commitments to the HFCC being limited in nature.

Nine Healthy Habits of a Successful Coalition

1. Empowering Leadership
2. Shared Decision Making
3. Value-added Collaboration
4. Dedicated Staff
5. Diversified Resources
6. Effective Communication
7. Clear Roles and Accountability
8. Flexible Structure
9. Setting and Implementing Priorities

An HFCC's success also depends on **Diversified Resources** to ensure wider support of the coalition's efforts. Additionally, **Effective Communication** keeps all partners informed and engaged. **Clear Roles and Accountability** enables members to understand their roles and better strive toward goals, while a **Flexible Structure** allows the coalition to adapt to changes easily. Finally, **Setting and Implementing Priorities** through action plans facilitates strategic and clear efforts.

Together these habits help HFCCs become dynamic, impactful forces to foster change. By adopting these nine healthy habits early on in development, HFCCs establish a framework that supports long-term trust and collaboration within the coalition and the community.

To dive deeper into the Nine Healthy Habits of a Successful Coalition, see Exercise 2.3 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook.*

Conclusion

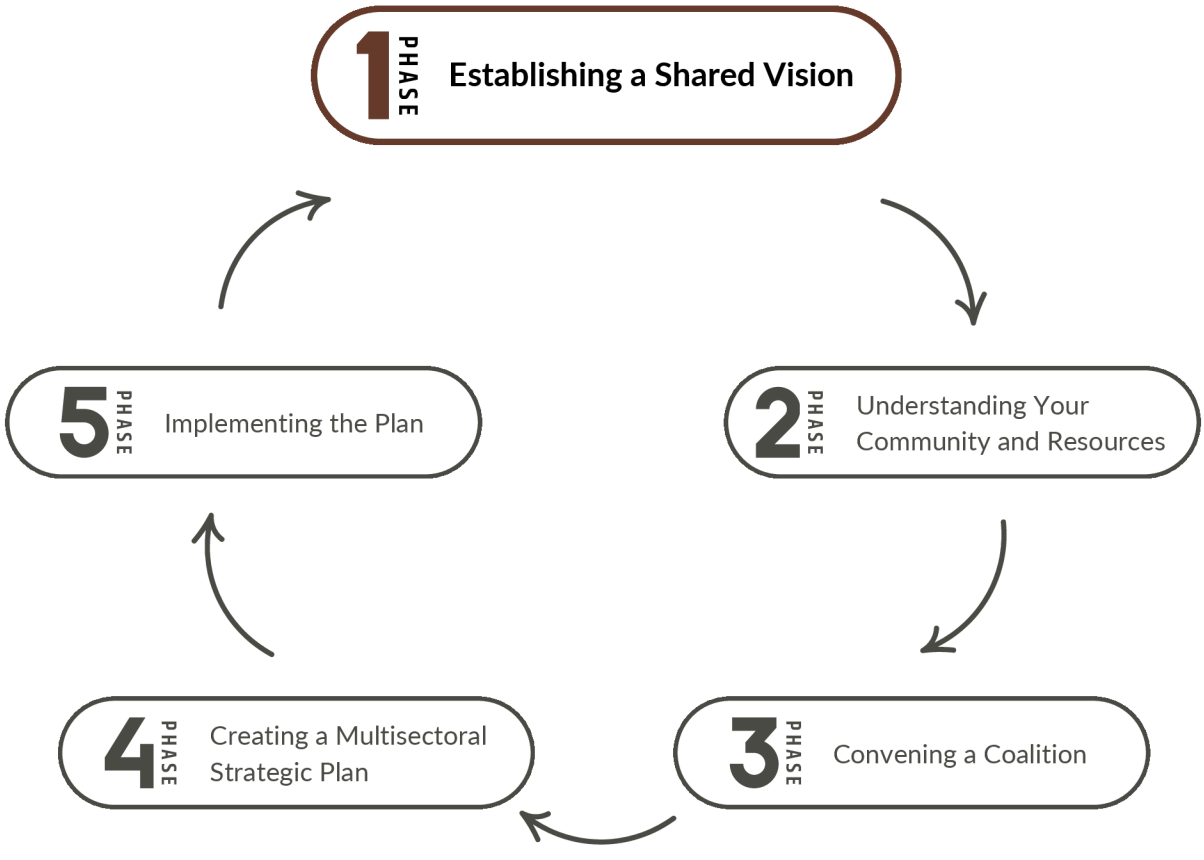
The Baylor Collaborative's Hunger Free Community Coalition model brings together partners across sectors through the three pillars of multisectoral collaboration, shared power, and collective impact to build a collaborative, community-centered approach to alleviating hunger. By working through each phase of coalition building and incorporating the nine healthy habits at the outset, HFCCs lay the groundwork for sustainable progress—empowering communities to address the root causes of food insecurity and move toward a future where everyone has consistent access to nutritious food.

In the next chapter, we will dive into Phase 1 of building a Hunger Free Community Coalition—Establishing a Shared Vision. In preparation for the next chapter, complete Exercise 2.4 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook* to review what you have learned and consider how it can apply to your own community.

PHASE 1

ESTABLISHING A SHARED VISION

CHAPTER 3



Before you begin this chapter, take the quiz in Exercise 3.1 of *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*. This will help you learn how you can best approach this course to help you move forward, whether you are starting from the beginning or already have a coalition in place.

Welcome to Phase 1 of building a Hunger Free Community Coalition—Establishing a Shared Vision. The initial formation of every coalition begins with a ***convener***.

As a participant in this course, you are already a convener! You are responding to a personal or organizational conviction to serve the community. As a convener, during Phase 1, you will identify and gather a core group of stakeholders who share your commitment to an organized response to end hunger. Once the core group is established, they will become the ***Community Leadership Council (CLC)*** that will carry out the remaining phases of building your new HFCC.

Convener: an individual, group of individuals, or an organization who recognizes the need for an organized response to hunger in their community and responds by committing to establishing a Hunger Free Community Coalition.

Community Leadership Council (CLC): identified and recruited by the convener(s), the Community Leadership Council is the group at the heart of building the Hunger Free Community Coalition. The CLC shares a commitment to an organized response to end hunger in the community and works together to build a strong foundation for a new Hunger Free Community Coalition.

Your Community Leadership Council will support the beginning efforts of the coalition as you move from initial stakeholder conversations (Phase 1, Chapter 3: Establishing a Shared Vision) all the way through to official formation (Phase 4, Chapter 7: Creating a Multisectoral Strategic Plan) and ongoing work (Phase 5, Chapter 8: Implementing the Plan). A broader invitation to the entire community (Phase 3, Chapter 6: Convening a Coalition) will take place after the CLC aligns around food security priorities (Phase 1, Chapter 3: Establishing a Shared Vision) and collects information about the community (Phase 2, Chapters 4 and 5: Understanding Your Community and Resources).

In this chapter, you (the convener) will learn how to identify and recruit committed stakeholders to form a CLC. Along the way, the information you gather during this phase will be helpful in later phases of coalition development as you collect and analyze data about hunger in your community. Additionally, during this phase you will also build relationships and make connections that generate interest and excitement about the development of an HFCC and begin to build broader community trust and investment in this process. By the end of Phase 1, your CLC will be established and prepared to undertake its first task—Understanding Your Community and Resources (Phase 2).

The Keys to a Shared Vision

As you identify stakeholders and begin to assemble a Community Leadership Council (CLC), ensuring the CLC shares a vision for impacting hunger in your community will create a common identity and motivate people to work together. Since your CLC will be strongest if a diverse group of individuals and organizations are represented, establishing a shared vision can be challenging. Despite the challenges, a shared vision is essential to creating a common identity that encourages collaboration and drives the coalition towards success.

As you consider what a shared vision looks like for your community, the following concepts will guide your CLC toward a sustainable and transformative HFCC. The Baylor Collaborative weaves these essential concepts throughout every phase of forming a coalition, beginning with establishing a shared vision.

Build Trust.

Building trust among the CLC, coalition members, and community is integral to generating commitment and investment in the coalition initially and to the success and sustainability of the coalition long-term. Because the CLC will anchor the forming coalition and its early initiatives, this group provides the consistency and reliability needed to build momentum in the community. As you work to build trust among the CLC and with the broader community, ensure the CLC includes vital stakeholders that represent multiple viewpoints and experiences.

Prioritize Proximity to the Problem.

Tackling a complex social issue like hunger requires you to have proximity, drawing close to a problem and gaining a robust understanding. Beyond engaging organizational partners with knowledge of the community, prioritize the dignity and involvement of those who experience and witness the challenges of hunger every day. Initiatives to end hunger should honor the particularity of each person's experience while also addressing systemic causes of hunger and poverty. Without proximity to the problem, your coalition will lack vital visibility into community assets, gaps in the food system, and desires of the community around which the most successful interventions will be designed.

"You can't understand most of the important things from a distance.

You have to get close."[57]

-Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy*

Meet Short Term Needs While Developing Lasting Solutions.

The work of your coalition is two-pronged. While your coalition must endeavor to address the immediate needs of community members, it must also set its sights on developing lasting solutions through human-centered interventions anchored in shared power. When identifying and recruiting CLC—and eventually coalition—members, consider their capacity to contribute their experience, resources, and momentum toward both short-term projects and systemic changes.

Support the Whole Community.

To address both immediate and long-term causes of hunger, it is important to recognize different subpopulations within your community who may face different challenges. For example, a single working parent of special needs children has different needs than a senior adult without local family support. As a result, solutions must be flexible and responsive to the unique needs of each group.

Some communities face more barriers than others due to long-standing social and economic conditions. Addressing these differences means ensuring each group has the support and resources they need to thrive, even if that support looks different from one group to another.[58]

As you build your CLC—and your coalition—keep in mind that ongoing efforts to engage, listen, and learn from the *whole* community are integral to a successful and sustainable coalition. The Baylor Collaborative recommends two tools that can help ensure your CLC and your coalition are establishing a shared vision that reflects the whole community:

The Stanford Social Innovation Review

This resource offers five strategies to do the work of supporting the whole community: (1) Ground the work in data and context, and target solutions. (2) Focus on systems change, in addition to programs and services. (3) Shift power within the collaborative. (4) Listen to and act with community. (5) Build equity leadership and accountability.[59]

https://ssir.org/articles/entry/centering_equity_in_collective_impact

Multnomah County 5P's Worksheet

Coalitions can use this tool "to improve planning, decision making, and resource allocation, leading to more racially equitable policies and programs...by deconstructing what is not working around racial equity; reconstructing and supporting what is working; shifting the way we make decisions and think about this work; and healing and transforming our structures, our environments, and ourselves."[60]

https://multco.us/file/5p%27s_worksheet/download

Building a Community Leadership Council

Step 1: Identify Stakeholders for the Community Leadership Council

The first step to building a Community Leadership Council is identifying community members with a similar commitment to collaborating for an organized response to community hunger that may be a good fit for the CLC. These community members are often referred to as *stakeholders*. Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or organizations interested in or impacted by food insecurity. Many types of stakeholders exist in your community with different skills, experiences, and resources to enact change.

Every community is unique; therefore, no two CLCs or coalitions will look the same. Involving individuals who represent many different sectors in the community to be part of the CLC ensures your developing coalition will have a variety of assets to leverage for collective impact.

To identify potential Community Leadership Council members, consider the interests, resources, and agenda the stakeholder will bring to the CLC. The more an individual can see how their interests align with the CLC's effort, the more likely they will be to fully commit to investing their time and resources to the CLC. Conversely, if an individual does not see how participating in the CLC aligns with their priorities or interests, they will not become or remain involved.

Individuals will vary in what they can contribute to the success of the CLC, and later the coalition, both in the development of the coalition and in the eventual impact the coalition can have on reducing food insecurity. One way of describing this is the range of strengths and contributions the stakeholder brings to the table. These contributions can take many forms, including financial and in-kind resources, expertise, skills, personal storytelling, influential networks, engagement with key populations (e.g., school districts, elected officials), and their roles as implementers of existing food access programs.

In identifying stakeholders for the CLC, consider both their levels of interest and the types of strengths and contributions they bring that can create change; this also includes non-traditional resources, such as the knowledge, resilience, and creativity an individual may have from experiencing food insecurity.

When thinking about stakeholder interests, it is also helpful to think about an individual's potential obstacles to becoming involved in the CLC. A stakeholder might see the value of being a part of the CLC but may be held back by other considerations. Sometimes these are insurmountable, but in many cases, they can be addressed by thinking strategically about how you can help them overcome the obstacles. For example, a single mother who has experienced food insecurity may be a strong potential CLC member based on her understanding of the community and its resources. However, childcare needs may prevent her from being involved. By providing childcare during CLC meetings or events, or by holding meetings when childcare is available to her, you can secure her commitment to the work of the CLC.

Who is at Your Tables?[61]

Supporting the whole community means:

- Engaging people with different backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences, and recognizing the differences as assets to learning and innovation.
- Recognizing everyone does not start at the same place, so some people will need different resources or support to achieve the same outcome. The goal is to level the playing field.
- Creating a true sense of belonging through authentic and empowered participation.

Understanding who might be on your Community Leadership Council in these ways can help you identify what strengths and gaps you may have in terms of experience and context expertise about the intended beneficiaries, issues, and neighborhoods you serve. If the majority of your team is in the outer circle, you need more community engagement.

Assess Your Tables

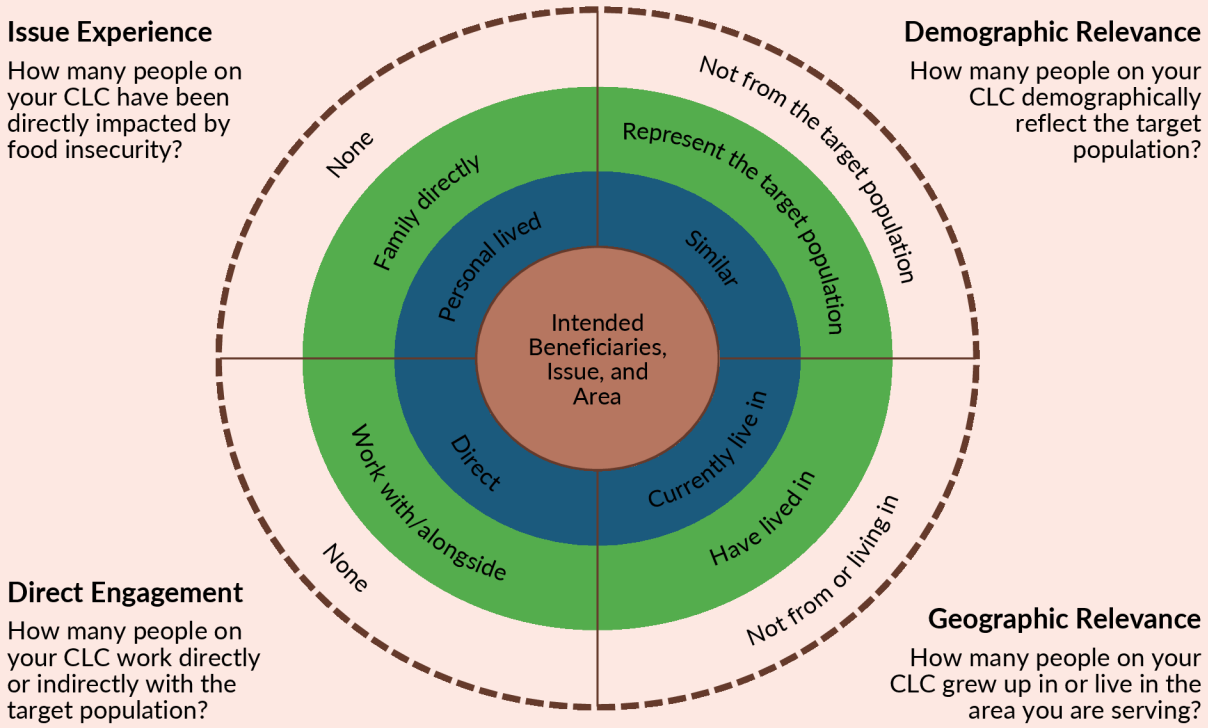

Issue Experience
How many people on your CLC have been directly impacted by food insecurity?
Demographic Relevance
How many people on your CLC demographically reflect the target population?
None
Family directly
Personal lived
Represent the target population
Similar
Not from the target population
Intended Beneficiaries, Issue, and Area
Direct
Work with/alongside
None
Currently live in
Have lived in
Not from or living in
Direct Engagement
How many people on your CLC work directly or indirectly with the target population?
Geographic Relevance
How many people on your CLC grew up in or live in the area you are serving?

Figure 6: Adapted from: Collective Impact Forum & Leading Inside Out. (2017, March 15). Community engagement tool. https://collectiveimpactforum.org/resource/community-engagement-toolkit/

Hill Country Hunger Alliance

Case Study

The Hill Country Hunger Alliance is an active coalition of food pantries, churches, school administrators, elected officials, businesses, and other area leaders who have committed to end hunger in Burnet County, Texas.

Beginning with volunteers from one church community who recognized the need for collaborative action to address hunger, volunteers identified twenty four different entities to invite to join the coalition. They set up one-on-one meetings to learn about the individual and/or organization, including unique interests and goals. Above all, they leveraged the opportunity to build relationships.

The result of this outreach was dramatic. Every single person with whom they met attended the first meeting of the coalition. These attendees helped spread the word to other interested organizations and businesses. Local government, for profit, and other sectors have remained engaged and provided continuous support through attendance, contribution, and financial donations.

Exercises 3.2 and 3.3 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook* guide you through identifying stakeholders for your CLC and analyzing their potential contributions. You will return to these exercises in later chapters when your CLC begins to conduct a landscape analysis (Chapter 4: Understanding Your Community) and when it begins to recruit coalition members (Chapter 6: Convening the Coalition).

Step 2: Recruit Stakeholders for the Community Leadership Council

Once you have identified stakeholders to engage, the next step is recruiting them to be part of the Community Leadership Council. This requires you to think about *how* to best engage each stakeholder. For some stakeholders, you may want to reach out to them for a one-on-one interview or a small group meeting. For others, it may be easier to invite them to participate in a larger gathering of stakeholders. In considering how to best engage with stakeholders, also think about what your first "ask" of them will be. Once you have determined their interest level and possible contributions, this "ask" could be to attend a meeting or to participate in the CLC in some other way.

Not all stakeholders you reach out to will become members of the CLC. However, by engaging these individuals, you can still build energy and excitement for the coalition before it even begins. The strategies you employ now in identifying and recruiting stakeholders for the CLC are the same strategies you will use later—in Phase 3: Convening the Coalition—to identify and recruit coalition members. Therefore, even though an outreach effort may not result in a CLC member, it is still a valuable interaction for building momentum for the future coalition and providing insight into the assets and needs of your community.

Whether you meet with stakeholders one-on-one or in a large group, strategically organizing an agenda for interaction allows participants to learn about the concept of the Hunger Free Community Coalition and why it could be beneficial to the community. Additionally, this is also a time for you to gather information about potential CLC member(s). Stakeholder recruitment can take different forms, including:

- **Individual Meetings or Interviews**: Individual meetings or interviews may be the quickest way to get started. Begin with those who are most likely to be interested in the issue of hunger or organizing a coalition to gain quick momentum. Some stakeholders are easier to reach by going to their office, home, or favorite coffee shop. When you meet, bring an agenda with planned questions and guiding topics to establish trust and build rapport.

As you meet with potential CLC members, ensure data collection is part of your meeting. From one-on-one meetings to large gatherings, collecting the thoughts, voices, and ideas of the community positions the CLC—and later the coalition—to make informed decisions down the road. For ideas about how to gather data during these meetings, refer to Chapter 4: Understanding Your Community.

If your stakeholder list includes an elected official, a one-on-one meeting is a great way to engage with them to share information about the CLC and offer them an opportunity to be involved. Engaging elected officials in the community does not need to feel intimidating. Even if the official does not become part of the CLC, they can help recruit others, provide meeting space, or offer other support to the coalition.

Tips for Successful Interviews

- Schedule the conversation for a time and place convenient for the stakeholder and conducive to dialogue. A quiet, comfortable, and hospitable setting with clear start and stop times will make for a more open and fruitful conversation.
- Don't forget to take your interview questions and a means of notetaking with you – notebook and pen, laptop, etc.
- Learn something about the person or organization ahead of time. People are always grateful to learn you took time to find out more about their role in the community and their work. It also can help get a conversation going!
- Dress appropriately for the setting and relationship. For example, if the person is someone you know well, but the conversation setting is a corporate office, business attire rather than casual clothes would likely be more appropriate.
- Respect the interviewee's time by starting and stopping on time and thanking them at the end.
- Follow up with a "thank you" note or email.

- **Informational Gathering:** Bringing stakeholders together to discuss and share concerns about food insecurity in the community quickly solidifies a potential Community Leadership Council's shared value of ending hunger. During these gatherings, intentional notetaking and opportunities for feedback elevate the meeting and encourage honest conversation. Emphasizing trust building and prioritizing proximity will spur interest among potential CLC members and help you gain momentum.

- **Community Forum:** By convening a broad reaching group, a community forum strategically brings together select stakeholders, the general public, and experts. In this setting and with careful planning, this event fosters learnings across groups about food insecurity and the initiatives already taking place in the community. Additionally, a community forum provides those who might be interested in participating in the CLC an opportunity to learn more and become involved.

- **Get Creative:** Variations on these types of events that reflect the community may include a luncheon with a guest speaker, a chili cook-off, an informational film, or even an art exhibit about food insecurity. Connect with community resources that will attract different community members and be innovative to reach those who might have never thought to join the CLC. These individuals bring imagination and new insights.

At the conclusion of the meeting or gathering, invite the potential CLC members to participate in the CLC or stay informed about the developing coalition through a *Call to Action*. **A Call to Action is a clear and direct next step for participants to stay engaged with the CLC and the forming coalition**. A Call to Action could be:

- A request to join an email list
- A request to sign up for a volunteer activity
- A commitment to attend the next meeting

For example, you may leave behind printed materials with stakeholders about the forming CLC and invite them to join an upcoming gathering. Most importantly, follow-up within a short time of the meeting. In many instances, the follow-up conversations will be the best time to directly invite stakeholders to participate as a CLC member.

To prepare to interview stakeholders for participation in the CLC, complete Exercise 3.4 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*.

Step 3: Assemble a Community Leadership Council

To form and sustain a coalition, it is important to assemble a Community Leadership Council of passionate individuals who feel a sense of ownership of the vision. The CLC will help recruit participants and guide coalition development. The CLC may also serve as founding members of the official coalition leadership team as it is developed and formalized.

Members of the CLC will share responsibilities for guiding the initial development process, including activities such as:

- Recruiting stakeholders and coalition members
- Organizing meetings and setting agendas
- Fundraising and grant writing
- Facilitating conversations and active participation
- Supporting robust communications, such as sending out meeting announcements, sending reminders, recording minutes, and following up
- Maintaining contact information for all stakeholders and points of contact
- Helping to determine an operating structure, including potential backbone support outside of the coalition

The following questions can help guide decisions about who to include in the CLC:

- Is there someone central to food security work such that the coalition's efforts in the community would struggle without their support and involvement?
- Who has the time and capacity to invest in this effort?
- Who has knowledge in the areas of hunger and food insecurity, either through their work or direct personal experience?
- Who has established and trusted relationships with key potential stakeholders?
- Who is a known and trusted person able to influence people in the community to join the effort?
- Who is an excellent team player and passionate about promoting collaboration?
- Who has proven experience in meeting facilitation and is impartial in the community?
- Who has experience leading and bringing people together?
- Who expressed the most interest and passion for the vision of creating a coalition?

As the coalition develops, it will be important to create a formal leadership structure that establishes roles and responsibilities for specific tasks, as well as determines those who will lead the coalition's action teams. This will be detailed in Chapter 7, Phase 4: Creating a Multisectoral Strategic Plan.

Conclusion

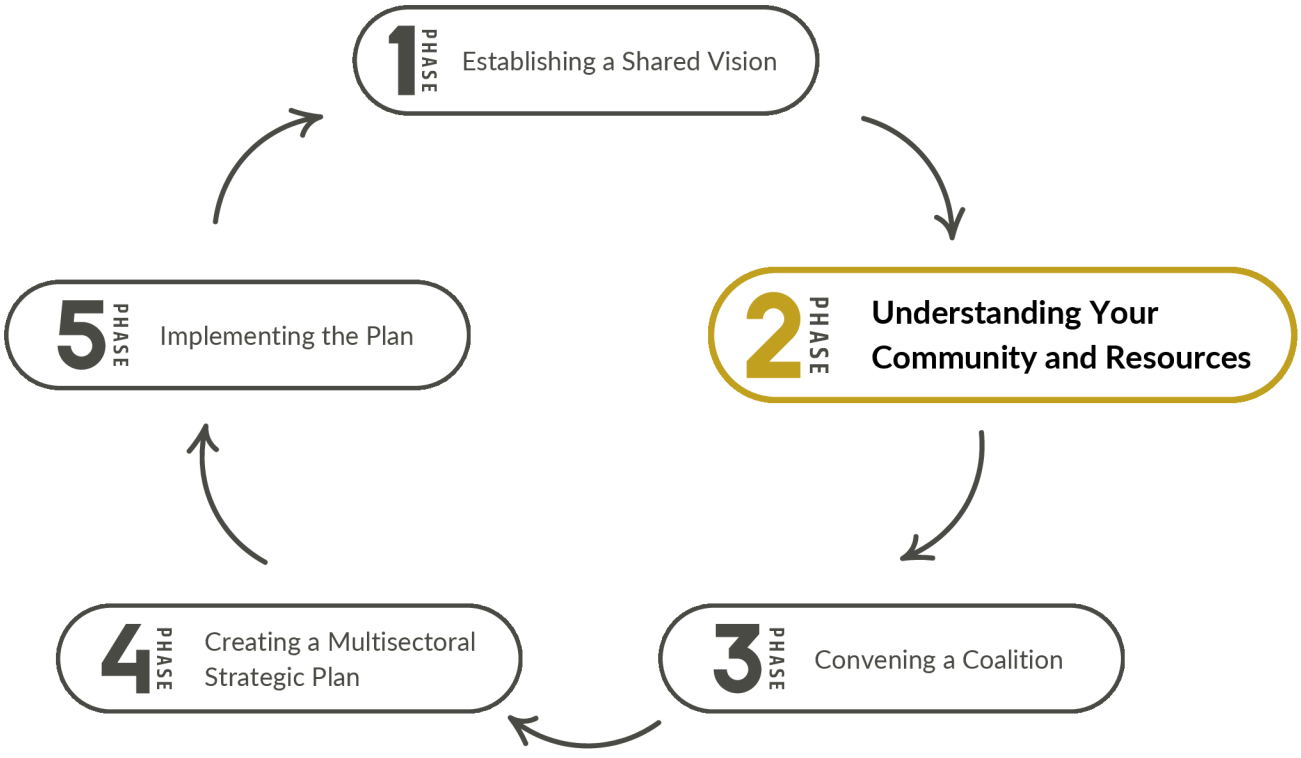
Phase 1 establishes a Community Leadership Council of multisectoral partners who are excited about and committed to learning more about their shared vision of ending hunger in the community. The momentum from the trust built during these conversations will support Phase 2, when the CLC will delve deeply into their community resources, challenges, and connections to food insecurity and potential solutions.

In the next chapter, we will begin Phase 2 of building a Hunger Free Community Coalition—Understanding Your Community. In preparation for the next chapter, complete Exercise 3.5 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*.

PHASE 2

UNDERSTANDING YOUR COMMUNITY

CHAPTER 4



Once your CLC is established, the council's first task is to thoroughly investigate and understand the hunger landscape in your community. During Phase 2: Understanding Your Community, your CLC will assess the extent and magnitude of food insecurity in your community, understand underlying causes, and identify existing initiatives and resources. The meetings and gatherings with potential stakeholders during Phase 1 lay the groundwork for Phase 2 by allowing CLC members to establish relationships across the community and gather initial data. By the end of Phase 2, your CLC will complete a landscape analysis, which is the main tool you will rely on to understand the food landscape in your community. Your coalition will also rely on your landscape analysis later to craft your strategic plan and initial community interventions.

What is a Landscape Analysis?

A landscape analysis is the comprehensive review of the state of hunger in a community. It highlights the community's assets, gaps in resources, and opportunities related to food insecurity across the community. Coalitions use the landscape analysis to guide goal setting, action steps, and targeted interventions.

The foundation of a reliable landscape analysis is data. To build on the coalition's shared vision, all stakeholders, no matter their role, must begin with the same information, so they can collaborate effectively. During the landscape analysis, your CLC will collect, analyze, and disseminate data to better understand the community's challenges and resources.

Why Complete an Asset-Based Landscape Analysis?[62]

Completing a landscape analysis is a crucial part of organizing communities for change because it provides coalition members with a deeper understanding of the community's strengths, needs, desires, culture, relationships, history, assets, social structure, and conflicts. An *asset-based* approach to a landscape analysis focuses on a community's unique strengths and resources, while also identifying the challenges facing the community. With a deeper understanding of community assets, coalitions can develop creative and community-specific solutions to meet local hunger needs.

A shared power approach to a landscape analysis includes all community members in identifying assets and inequities. Thus, an asset-based landscape analysis provides a deeper understanding of the community. As a result, the landscape analysis helps communities identify the starting point for work in the community to improve food security. Intentionally targeting coalition work at areas of identified need can lead to systems-level change that reflects the community's needs and aspirations. In addition to systems change, the asset-based landscape analysis accomplishes multiple purposes, including:

- identifying resources, connections, talents, and skills already available in the community to address food insecurity, while also identifying gaps and barriers that limit the full utilization of those resources
- encouraging working together as a coalition to better understand the community and establishing the groundwork for developing working relationships that produce creative and collaboratively designed interventions
- uniting those working in silos, often unintentionally, around a broader vision that recognizes the work already being done while creating pathways to do more together
- identifying new individuals or organizations to join the coalition
- helping the coalition determine how to leverage the strengths of the community to address the gaps or challenges within the community

How to Conduct an Asset-Based Landscape Analysis

A robust landscape analysis includes three critical components:

1. It covers a **defined, physical location**.
2. It reports **measurable, numerical data** (quantitative data) about hunger in the community, alongside **descriptive data** (qualitative data) that includes stories and themes from community members.
3. Using the data, it analyzes the intersections of the community's strengths, needs, and gaps.

To complete the landscape analysis report, your CLC will collect numerical and statistical data from publicly available sources (quantitative data), engage strategies to listen to community voices (qualitative data), and build an asset map that helps to identify community resources and challenges.

Data collection and analysis may be as simple or complex as your coalition's capacity and needs require. Your CLC members may have the experience, capacity, and resources to manage data collection and analysis, or funding may allow you to outsource this step. Often, however, CLC members develop a landscape analysis on their own, learning new skillsets and sharing tasks as they fit the skills, capacity, and resources of the CLC members.

As you prepare to gather quantitative and qualitative data and build your asset map, keep a few things in mind:

- **Centering Multiple Perspectives:** When examining your community's hunger landscape, local experts (including community members who have experienced food insecurity) will be an asset to data collection and evaluation. Additionally, the whole CLC should be engaged in the process of collecting information and should strive to include as many different community voices as possible. Those with perspectives outside of traditional leaders and service providers, as well as those from disproportionately affected demographics (e.g., seniors, people with disabilities, formerly incarcerated individuals) are vital to this process.[63]

- **Compiling and Storing Data:** At the outset, consider how data will be compiled and stored. Ideally, all coalition members will be able to access data during subsequent phases of coalition building to guide decisions and goal setting.

Step 1: Define the Geographical Scope the Landscape Analysis will Cover

In considering what geographical/physical region your landscape analysis will examine, consider the following:

- Are there widely accepted boundaries in the community that are easy to delineate (city, county, school districts, etc.)?
- What are the organizational focus boundaries of the organizations that will potentially participate in the coalition?
- Are there key geographical areas the CLC, community stakeholders, and potential coalition members are passionate about?
- If coalition meetings might be in-person, how far will individuals realistically travel to come to coalition meetings on a regular basis?

Step 2: Collect Numerical and Statistical Data (Quantitative Data)

Quantitative data is measurable data reflected in numbers, facts, and figures. When gathering quantitative data about your community, the following categories provide a better understanding of the hunger landscape:

- Demographic data: age, ethnicity, race, housing costs
- Federal nutrition program participation data
- Food resources
- Food insecurity rates
- Food access information

In the U.S., there are many websites with publicly available data that can be accessed through relatively simple internet searches. The ***United States Census Bureau*** (https://data.census.gov) is a helpful place to begin gathering data and provides demographic data for targeted areas, as well as income levels and poverty rates, along with data about education, employment, housing, health, family and living arrangements, and race and ethnicity. Another publicly available website from the ***USDA Food and Nutrition Service*** (https://www.fns.usda.gov/usamap) houses state-level data related to participation rates in federal nutrition programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and child nutrition programs, like the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). In addition to government websites, Feeding America also publishes data related to food insecurity through its ***Map the Meal Gap*** (https://map.feedingamerica.org) website. *Map the Meal Gap* provides national, state, and county-level food security data broken down into demographic categories. Finally, for Texas-based coalitions, the ***Baylor Collaborative's Hunger Data Lab*** (https://hungerandpoverty.web.baylor.edu/hungerdatalab/dashboar ds) houses interactive, user-friendly dashboards for hunger data in the state of Texas.

Exercises 4.1a-4.1c in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook* provide activities that will help you further explore some of these resources.

In addition to these resources, you may also find relevant quantitative data for your community through state or county government websites, anti-hunger organizations' reports or databases, and local non-profit or research-based agency webpages.

Step 3: Engage Strategies to Listen to Community Voices (Qualitative Data)

Qualitative data includes stories, quotes, and images from the community, which are key to completing a landscape analysis and understanding hunger in your community. To gather qualitative data, you will need to engage strategies that allow you to listen to diverse voices in your community.

There are multiple strategies HFCCs can use to listen to and engage community voices. You are not limited to just one strategy; rather, choose the strategies that work best for your community and context. For example, strategies like Photovoice and the *Community Voice Method* use photographs and documentary film to elicit stakeholder input that can be more sensitive to place meanings, values, and stories.[64] The following strategies will allow you to capture the unique stories, perspectives, and lived experiences of your community.

Community Forum

Strategy #1

A carefully planned community forum brings together an array of community members to identify assets and resources. When planning a community forum, ensure you promote the event in a way that welcomes attendees from all parts of the community. A diverse group of attendees will enhance the stories, input, ideas, and experiences collected.

Choose a convenient and comfortable location for all attendees. Include interactive components with plenty of opportunities for participants to share their ideas with the group in multiple ways (e.g., written feedback, small group discussions, large group discussions, visual and aural media) to allow for the variety of preferred communication styles from quiet to boisterous contributors.

Often, small group breakout sessions with each group reporting its discussion to the larger group effectively includes the most voices. An example of a simple and highly effective small group activity begins with participants answering the following phrases, then sharing their responses with the group.[65]

- Heart: “I am passionate about...”
- Head: “I have knowledge about...”
- Hands: “I know how to...”

Small Group Listening Sessions

Strategy #2

When a large community forum is unlikely to bring a wide range of individuals together, a series of small group listening sessions is an effective alternative. For community members who live in widely dispersed towns or neighborhoods, these sessions ensure every part of the community is involved. Additionally, sessions can be coordinated to engage specific populations, such as holding sessions at senior centers or group homes.

Small group listening sessions can take place in community centers, libraries, churches, or even homes—any easily accessible place people feel comfortable. Enlisting CLC members to host a session in which they invite their friends, neighbors, and/or colleagues is an excellent engagement method.

One-on-One Conversations

Strategy #3

Often, one-on-one meetings, calls, and/or interviews with a variety of community leaders can provide focused knowledge about organizations, local leadership, industry partners, towns, or neighborhoods.

The more one-on-ones conducted, the more robust data gathering will be. The CLC might create a strategic list of key stakeholders and share interview responsibilities across the council. To build momentum from initial meetings, ask those being interviewed to suggest additional contacts. These one-on-one meetings can also be a powerful tool for spreading the word about the developing coalition and inviting new people to participate.

For a sample Community Voices gathering agenda, including sample questions to help you gather qualitative data, refer to Exercise 4.2 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*.

During Phase 1, you conducted several activities where community members provided feedback, including hosting one or more community gatherings and conducting stakeholder interviews. The information you collected from stakeholders during those activities is *qualitative data*. Make sure this information is stored with the qualitative data you collect during this phase, so it can be incorporated into the landscape analysis.

Collecting qualitative data is inherently personal, so careful planning and consideration is needed to make sure participants feel comfortable and respected. Additionally, it is important to consider strategies that allow diverse stakeholders to provide feedback and feel welcome. As you develop your qualitative data collection strategies, consider the following:

- Hold meetings at times that are convenient for those the CLC hopes to reach, including nights and weekends.
- Utilize a variety of mass outreach tactics (e.g., email, social media, flyers), but do not rely solely on them. Consider taking the time to invite people personally.
- Provide light refreshments and snacks to create a more relaxed environment.
- Keep track of all information gathered and compile it into one document to share with participants, including attendance lists, feedback, and referrals.
- Invite all participants to join the coalition, once it is established, by sharing upcoming opportunities for them to get more involved.
- If using an interview format, prepare and standardize questions ahead of time.
- Provide a translator and/or bilingual materials when a community has a significant population of non-English-speaking members.

Human-Centered Design

At multiple times throughout the development of the coalition – from gathering qualitative data to developing coalition policies and implementing community interventions – focusing on "human-centered design" allows the coalition to prioritize the needs, experiences, and perspectives of the community to guide the process.

Human-Centered Design (HCD) is a concept credited to Professor John E. Arnold in his work at Stanford University in 1958. Arnold proposed the idea that in engineering, the designs "should be human-centered and focused on positive and long-lasting change."[66] The same concept has been applied across sectors and HCD has been adopted by organizations like the Gates Foundation and UNICEF. HCD allows entities to solve complex problems with human dignity at the forefront. HCD centers efforts on creating solutions that resonate with the people they intend to impact and are, therefore, more effective, usable, and sustainable. Through deep engagement such as interviews, observations, and immersion, coalitions are better able to understand community needs, contexts, and pain points. IDEO.org, a leading authority in the HCD approach, provides free practical guides, worksheets, and tools about the phases of Inspiration, Ideation, and Implementation at https://www.designkit.org/.

Gathering and Compiling Qualitative Data

Qualitative data collection during meetings and gatherings may be as simple as taking notes, or it may look like poster-size group brainstorming. There are many free tools, phone apps, and computer software options that will make collecting and analyzing qualitative data easy and efficient.

- **Transcribing:** Many software programs and phone apps can capture real-time voice-to-text transcription. The transcribing tool captures the conversation that can be edited later to quickly produce reports. Tools that transcribe recordings include Canva, Descript, and Amazon. Tools that transcribe in real time while recording include Notta and Google Docs.

- **Recording:** Recording meetings and brainstorming sessions ensures details are captured and not missed. Group sessions often present the challenge of people talking over one another or speaking quickly. Recording the session also allows for translation services. Tools that can record meetings include Evernote and ScreenApp.

- **Notetaking:** Identifying a few notetakers is a smart idea in case transcribing or recording tools fail. In addition to traditional paper and pen, there are free software and phone apps that provide shared documents and instant access to the notes for all participants. In addition to recording the discussion, notetakers may record ideas and thoughts during brainstorming sessions. However, engaged brainstorming can be more effective by strategically providing participants with notepads, sticky notes, and poster paper. This allows the entire group to participate simultaneously without the limitation of a singular conversation. Tools that provide online notetaking support are Microsoft OneNote, FireFlies.AI, and Mural. Evernote offers a handwriting to online text converter.

A Note About Recording and Transcription: *Always ask for permission before recording (audio or visual) or transcribing meetings. When the meeting begins, ensure everyone knows the meeting is being recorded or transcribed and consents to the recording or transcription.*

Regarding individuals under the age of 18, best practices dictate you refrain from requesting quotes, photos, videos, or recordings without the explicit and written consent of their legal guardian.

Step 4: Build an Asset Map

An *asset map* is a visual or descriptive representation of the strengths and resources of a community. Asset mapping involves connecting with community members to understand the existing resources, capacities, gifts, and skills already being used or that could be used to address food insecurity.

The assets that are often "mapped" include:

- **Physical environments and resources:** schools, hospitals, churches, libraries, etc.
- **Organizational and institutional assets:** businesses, societies, associations, sports teams, faith communities, etc.
- **Individuals:** healthcare workers, teachers, community leaders, etc.

Complete an Asset Map

To complete an asset map, follow these steps:

1. **Define Boundaries:** Determine the physical, geographic boundaries the coalition plans to serve. (These geographic boundaries are likely to be those you already identified during Step 1.)
2. **Identify the Assets:** Gather as many stakeholders as possible to identify existing resources, capacities, gifts, and skills already being used or that could be used to alleviate food insecurity in the community. As you gather individuals and organizations together to collect qualitative data, these gatherings can also serve as spaces to lead the group in identifying community assets.
3. **List and Organize the Assets:** Document and identify assets through a format that fits the community's needs and abilities, such as sticky notes or digital asset mapping templates.
4. **Share the Asset Map:** The asset map will be part of your final landscape analysis report. However, it can also be shared with community members on its own. You can build trust through transparency by ensuring the information gathered is shared widely and made accessible through multiple modalities to reach as many members of the community as possible.

Select an Asset Mapping Tool

Multiple asset mapping tools are readily available online. When selecting a tool, it should match the CLC's capacity and the community context, so the CLC will finish the project, and the asset map can be shared widely with the community. For example, if only a few members of the community have access to Wi-Fi, an online asset mapping tool may be counterproductive. Creately (https://creately.com/diagram/example/jwpw5qb71/asset-map-blank-diagram) is a digital resource with a free asset map tool coalitions can use to create and archive work.

Examples of Asset Maps

Asset maps can be as simple as using sticky notes and sharpies or can be technologically advanced.

Figure 7: A sticky note asset map generated during an in-person community gathering.[67]

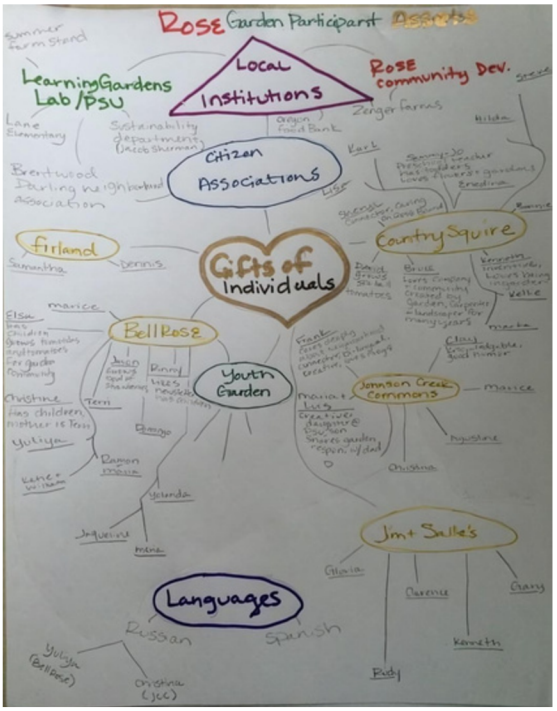


Figure 8: Community members listed each individual's assets in order to assess how to use everyone's abilities to achieve their overall goals.[68]

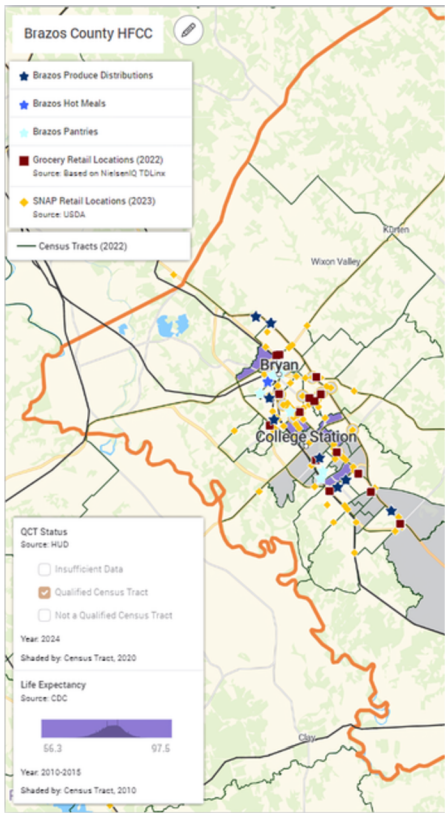


Figure 9: PolicyMap Asset Map

Figures 9 and 10 show online versions of asset maps from PolicyMap[69] and Google Maps.[70]

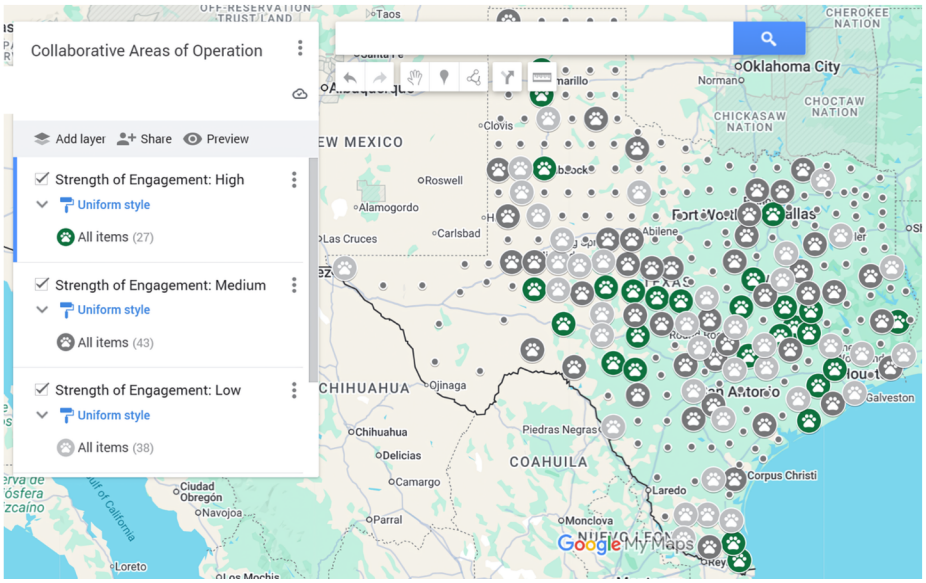


Figure 10: Google Maps Asset Map

Step 5: Create a Report

After collecting quantitative data about the community, compiling and organizing qualitative data, and building an asset map, it is time to draft your landscape analysis report. The following questions will help your CLC analyze the data it has collected for the report:

- What existing assets or resources are not being utilized, or are being inadequately utilized? Why?
- What programs and services are duplicative?
- Which part of the community is not being served or is served inadequately?
- Are the available programs accessible and responsive to the needs of all households in the community?
- Are there identifiable geographic regions that are underserved?
- Are the community's assets, resources, and programs being leveraged to make the greatest impact?

Drafting Your Landscape Analysis Report

Report formats vary depending on the capacity of the coalition and the intended community audience. A landscape analysis can take the form of a written Word document, a designed PDF, or a PowerPoint slide deck. You can find a landscape analysis report template in Exercise 4.3 of *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to the Handbook*, or you can do a simple online search for free report templates. You can also consider involving the community in drafting and designing the report. For example, your CLC could reach out to a local college, university, or even high school to give students real world experience in compiling the report and learning more about your community.

One important element of the landscape analysis report is deciding how to creatively and effectively share the data – both the statistics and the stories. Quantitative data may be best visualized through pie charts, line graphs, bar charts, tables, and other forms to visualize the data in engaging and understandable ways. Graphs, tables, and charts can be created in Microsoft Excel, Google Sheets, Canva, and other platforms. Qualitative data may be best visualized through word clouds, photos and images, formatted quotes, and other creative forms to communicate the stories, observations, and experiences gathered in the landscape analysis process.

Mower County Hometown Food Security Project
https://hometownfoodsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Mower-County-Hometown-Food-Security-Community-Assessment-Report-web.pdf

Bell & Coryell Counties - Food Access Community Needs Assessment
https://baylor.box.com/shared/static/lzcoc7sryph6kim9xr6y66ouvyoz5ei9.pdf

Ending Hunger in Oklahoma: An Assessment of Food Insecurity and Resources in Oklahoma
https://www.hungerfreeok.org/theassessment/

Brazos County, Texas Scan
https://baylor.box.com/shared/static/z0ohnfj3dw25bsffi7voaoqgbu8e50vr.pptx

The reports listed in the column to the left are excellent examples of landscape analyses completed by HFCCs.

Sharing and Using your Landscape Analysis Report

Your landscape analysis report will be shared with the potential coalition members, participants in the asset-mapping process, and the broader community. Sharing the report can build trust within the community and generate momentum for building the coalition. By sharing the report with those who contributed data, your CLC demonstrates transparency, reciprocity, and respect for the contributors.

The report also will serve as a catalyst for the coalition later in its development as it determines key priority areas and action steps. You will return to the report at multiple times throughout the coalition's development and beyond to guide issue prioritization and inform coalition policies and implementation practices.

For a sample landscape analysis report template, refer to Exercise 4.3 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*.

Could AI Support Your Landscape Analysis Report?

As artificial intelligence (AI) further develops, you may decide to seek assistance from an AI tool to review and analyze your data. As you determine whether this method would be helpful for your coalition, here are a few considerations to keep in mind:

- AI is a useful tool for summarizing. For example, you might consider using AI in situations like summarizing an interview of a stakeholder in your community or transcribing qualitative data from recorded interviews.

- Review your AI tool's privacy policies before uploading data to ensure you understand how the data will be used, stored, shared, and reproduced. **Inputting original data into AI can compromise the privacy and confidentiality of gathered data.** AI data also may be used widely across the internet, so always de-identify qualitative data by deleting individual names and other personally identifiable information (PII) before giving your AI tool access to the data.

- To achieve the best results, carefully craft a prompt that will direct the tool to review data for themes, patterns, needs, assets, etc. Carefully review the results from AI to ensure accuracy. Also, take care to edit and improve the output from the tool; AI is not perfect!

- The landscape analysis process is designed to be intentional and hands-on; AI turns data review and analysis into a short-term rather than long-term process, which can rob the coalition of the opportunity to decide as a group what common themes appear.

- AI may be a useful tool; however, coalitions should rely on the data gathered and their local context to identify resources, gaps, and targeted interventions.

Conclusion

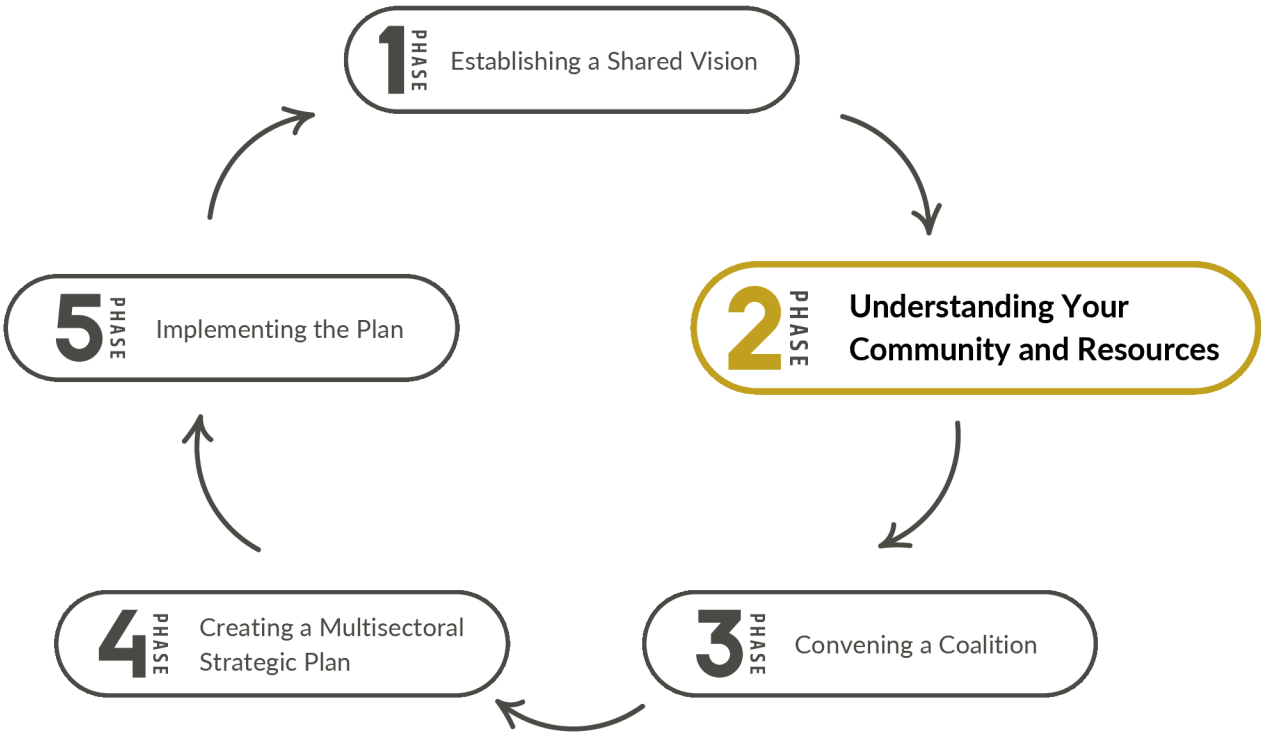
In this chapter, your CLC learned why understanding your community is critical at this stage of coalition building and how completing a landscape analysis contributes to your understanding of your community's assets, gaps, and resources. With the information you gather through the landscape analysis, your CLC will be equipped to create a report that identifies community assets, explains quantitative data on the issue of food insecurity, and shares qualitative data that captures the unique stories and voices in the community. Together, your landscape analysis report presents a written picture of the community food landscape, which will be important as your coalition shares this report with the community to recruit coalition members and build a multisectoral strategic plan (see Chapter 7).

In the next chapter, you will learn about the resources available to your community to assist those facing food insecurity. Before you proceed, review and respond to the reflection questions about what you have learned about your community so far by completing Exercise 4.4 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*.

PHASE 2

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RESOURCES

CHAPTER 5



In addition to learning about your community through the landscape analysis process, during Phase 2: Understanding Your Community and Resources, your CLC will also explore the federal and charitable resources your community can leverage to alleviate hunger.

In the last chapter, you examined how the landscape analysis process uses asset mapping to identify the unique resources available in each community. Most likely, your asset map will reveal some federal nutrition programs your community already uses, like school lunch programs. Strengthening and maximizing federal nutrition programs is essential to increasing food security in your community. This chapter examines some of the most widely used federal nutrition programs and explores how your Hunger Free Community Coalition can help your community implement and use them effectively.

As you read this chapter, you will notice **Action Items** following some of the content. The Action Items provide suggestions for how your Hunger Free Community Coalition can engage in specific ways to increase access to federal nutrition programs in your community. Although your coalition has not officially launched in this phase, when your coalition is ready to determine priority areas and action teams (Chapter 7) and implement your strategic plan (Chapter 8), you can refer back to these Action Items for inspiration.

Introduction to Federal Nutrition Programs

Federal nutrition programs are central to addressing food insecurity. The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers 16 nutrition programs funded by federal dollars and implemented by state agencies.[71] (See Appendix A for descriptions of these nutrition programs.) Historically, long-term government funding and operation has ensured these programs are stable and can be relied on to support local communities.

Federal nutrition programs provide various levels of support to beneficiaries. As a result, many households rely on more than one program to meet their household food needs. For example, a family who participates in SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) may also participate in WIC (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) if they have a child under five years old, as well as the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program if they have school-aged children. For this reason, coalitions must develop both a robust understanding of the federal nutrition programs available to individuals in their area and a strategy for encouraging eligible community members to participate.

Federal Nutrition Programs = Local Community Dollars

Encouraging eligible community members to participate in federal nutrition programs not only ensures individuals at risk of food insecurity receive the food they need but also increases the flow of federal dollars into the local community, strengthening local economies.

Federal nutrition programs—such as SNAP and child nutrition programs—are funded through appropriations made by Congress. These funds are allocated annually or through multi-year legislation to ensure food access for individuals and families with limited access to economic resources. Once approved, the money is made available to states, schools, and eligible individuals—but only if they choose to participate. When eligible individuals decline to enroll, or when states decline to implement certain programs, those federal dollars remain unspent. Thus, local taxpayer dollars do not reach local residents.

One way to think about unused federal resources at the state and local levels is to imagine money being "left on the table." When someone who qualifies for SNAP does not enroll, or when a child who is eligible for free school lunch does not participate, those individuals and families often turn to charitable food resources, like food banks, food pantries, or faith communities, for support. This shifts the burden from the federal government—where funds have already been allocated—to local charitable organizations that rely on community donations and limited resources. The same dynamic occurs when a state opts out of a federal program; the responsibility for assisting residents with limited access to resources often falls to local organizations or existing state-funded services. In essence, when Congress appropriates funding for nutrition programs, it is offering resources to individuals, communities, and states to use. If those resources go untapped, that federal support is essentially left behind while the need remains.

Encouraging eligible community members to participate in federal nutrition programs is vital to improving community food security. Hunger Free Community Coalition work will be enhanced by understanding these programs and their footprint in your area. In particular, SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), WIC (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children), and child nutrition programs can have an immediate impact on a household's access to nutritious, affordable food.[72] (See Appendix A for a full list of these nutrition programs.)

To look deeper into whether your community is leaving money on the table from federal nutrition programs, complete Exercise 5.1 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook.*

Your Hunger Free Community Coalition can use this knowledge to:

- Educate eligible participants about how to enroll and access federal nutrition programs, and
- Advocate to elected officials and community representatives about the benefits of maximizing local resources via federal nutrition programs

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)[73]

SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamps Program from 1964 to 2008, is the largest federal nutrition assistance program in the United States and is considered by economists to play a critical role in efforts to end food insecurity in the country.[74]

SNAP provides food benefits that supplement the monthly food budgets of participating households through an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. An EBT card looks and functions like a debit card and can be used at authorized SNAP retail locations, like grocery stores and farmers' markets. With their EBT card, participants can purchase unprepared foods, such as produce, meat, dairy, grain products, non-alcoholic beverages, snacks, and seeds and plants that produce food. SNAP benefits cannot be used to purchase prepared foods (like rotisserie chickens), alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, or non-food products, like diapers or hygiene products. In some states, SNAP participants may be prohibited from using an EBT card to purchase foods like sugar-sweetened beverages, candy, and other items.

"SNAP is the most far-reaching, **powerful tool available** to ensure that all Americans, regardless of background, **have access** to healthy, affordable groceries."[75]

-Stacy Dean, Former Deputy Undersecretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services, United States Department of Agriculture

According to the USDA Economic Research Service, SNAP contributes more to the economy than a dollar-for-dollar match. Each month, instead of spending their limited household income on basic food necessities, an average of 42.2 million SNAP participants can use their remaining income towards other sectors of the economy, such as housing, transportation, health care, education, or technology, creating a multiplier effect on U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP). For example, in a slowing economy when SNAP benefits increase by $1 billion, the GDP in turn increases by $1.54 billion. An increase at this level is estimated to support 13,560 additional jobs.[76]

Many SNAP households (79%) include at least one person who is a child, older adult, or person with a disability.[77] Eligibility and benefit amounts for SNAP are determined by household income and assets or through *categorical eligibility*, a simplified process for households receiving other federal benefits (like Medicaid) because they already qualify for another means-tested program.[78] While SNAP is a federal program, program administration is the responsibility of state agencies. As a result, there is significant variation across state applications, recertification processes, policy manuals and regulations, asset test requirements for eligibility, and availability of general program information.

Hunger Free Community Coalitions can work to increase SNAP participation in their communities through a number of innovative outreach and education methods. These methods should be determined based on community needs and insights and can be as simple as hosting an information session or as elaborate as creating a curriculum for a specific population.

Eating Well is a SNAP!

Case Study

Upon realizing many older adults who are eligible for SNAP do not participate, the Dallas Coalition for Hunger Solutions (located in Dallas, Texas) developed its own curriculum called *Eating Well is a SNAP!* This curriculum helped older adults understand how to apply for SNAP and how to shop and prepare meals using their SNAP benefits, along with reducing the stigma among older adults related to SNAP use. During training sessions, assistance was available on-site to help individuals apply for SNAP. The *Eating Well is a SNAP!* program has been adopted by the Baylor Collaborative and is currently being edited for use in communities across Texas.

WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children)[79]

WIC provides free, healthy foods and personalized nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to other services. In addition to other eligibility requirements, a health professional must determine a qualifying applicant is at nutritional risk. In many cases, these appointments are completed at a WIC clinic at no cost to the applicant.

Women can participate in WIC if they are pregnant (up to six weeks after birth), postpartum (up to six months after birth), and breastfeeding (up to the infant's first birthday). Infants and children can participate up to their fifth birthday.[80]

WIC is designed to provide the nutrition that tends to be lacking in the diets of women and young children with limited access to resources. Through WIC, women and children receive different food packages designed to supplement the full array of foods that a pregnant or postpartum woman or a young child needs. For women, these food packages are based on their stage of pregnancy and postpartum recovery. For children, they are based on the infant or child's age and development. These packages authorize participants to purchase certain types of approved foods, including fruits, vegetables, meats, tofu, cereal, baby foods, dairy products, and infant formula, as well as other healthy and nutritious items. The support USDA provides through WIC expands beyond just providing nutritious foods to supplement diets; WIC also provides education on healthy eating and living, including breastfeeding education and support, and referrals to health care providers.

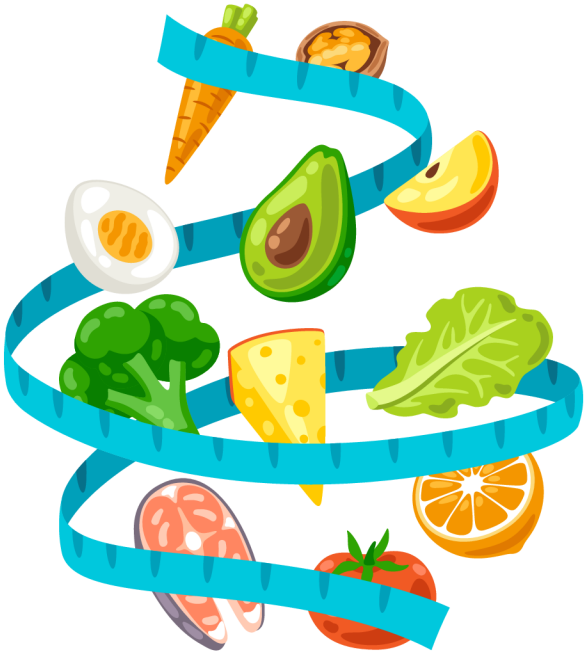
- Referrals to WIC come through many different pathways. Inconsistent referral points create confusion and leave many families unaware of their eligibility. By educating service providers, like medical offices, about WIC's potential benefits to their clients, Hunger Free Community Coalitions can encourage clear referral pathways, eliminate confusion, and guarantee eligible families receive the nutrition support they need.[81]

- The WIC smartphone app can be a game changer to help participants correctly identify eligible items while shopping. The app's barcode scanner tells a participant whether an item is WIC-eligible at their chosen store and if they still have benefits available for that particular item. Raising awareness of this tool could help families maximize their WIC benefits.[81]

Child Nutrition Programs[82]

USDA child nutrition programs provide healthy meals to children free of charge or at a reduced cost during the school year and in the summer. Taken together, child nutrition programs make up the second largest investment in federal nutrition programs. Some of the most widely used programs are described below:

- **National School Lunch Program (NSLP):**[83] provides nutritionally balanced, free or low-cost lunches to children each school day
- **School Breakfast Program (SBP):**[84] provides free or low-cost breakfast to children each school day
- **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP):**[85] provides reimbursements for meals served to children and youth participating in afterschool care programs
- **Summer Meal Programs - Summer Food Service Program, Seamless Summer Option, Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (SFSP, SSO, Summer EBT):**[86] provide convenient, flexible opportunities for children to receive free meals during the summer



As with SNAP and WIC, **Congress** authorizes child nutrition programs and appropriates funds for them through the legislative process. The **USDA** then administers the programs by issuing regulations and distributing funds to the states. **State agencies**, often departments of education or agriculture, receive the funding from USDA and are responsible for overseeing implementation at the local level, ensuring program sponsor compliance with federal guidelines and program goals. **Program sponsors**, typically school districts, nonprofits or local governments, then operate the programs at the community level (for example, by creating and serving meals). Program sponsors operate these programs at one or more **program sites**. For example, a summer meal program sponsor might operate a summer meal site at two different community libraries. State agencies reimburse program sponsors for eligible meals served based on daily participation numbers at program sites.

How Child Nutrition Programs Operate

Congress: Authorizes the program and appropriates funds

then

USDA FNS: Issues regulations and distributes funds to state agencies

next

State Agencies: Oversee program implementation and ensure program sponsor compliance with federal guidelines and program goals

then

Program Sponsors: Operate programs at the community level

finally

Program Sites: Locations where programs operate

Impact of Child Nutrition Programs

Child nutrition programs impact both child nutrition and household food budgets. When children participate in these programs, it offsets household spending on groceries and gives families flexibility to use financial resources for other basic needs. One child needs three healthy meals everyday—21 meals each week. During the school year, if children receive a nutritious breakfast, lunch and afterschool meal five times a week, this provides 15 of their 21 needed meals. By providing more than 70 percent of the weekly meals children need during the school year, when fully utilized by the community, child nutrition programs provide a critical resource for families struggling to meet their household food needs.

A Case for School Breakfast

Efforts to improve school breakfast participation show how small changes, such as where and when breakfast is served, dramatically impact participation levels. The traditional school breakfast model calls for meals to be served in the cafeteria prior to the start of the school day. However, this model assumes students will arrive at school early enough to get to the cafeteria, go through the line, eat breakfast, and make it to class on time. Additionally, school breakfast can be stigmatized; older students may choose to be hungry out of fear of being labeled or disparaged by their peers.[87]

Research indicates alternative breakfast models increase participation in the School Breakfast Program.[88] Innovative breakfast service models, like Grab & Go Breakfast, allow students to receive breakfast on their way to class either before school or during a morning break. In the Breakfast in the Classroom model, children receive breakfast in the classroom at the start of the school day while teachers take attendance or give classroom announcements. Innovative models such as these increase child access to and participation in the School Breakfast Program, alleviating child hunger. To learn more about these alternative breakfast models, review the Food Research & Action Center's (FRAC) fact sheet at the link to the right.

FRAC Alternative Breakfast Models Fact Sheet
https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/how_it_works_bic_fact_sheet.pdf

School Breakfast Program

Case Study

Spring Independent School District in Texas converted six elementary school campuses from a traditional breakfast model, serving students breakfast in the cafeteria prior to the start of the day, to a Breakfast in the Classroom model. By bringing breakfast directly to classrooms at the start of the school day, participation levels increased from 20-25% to over 80% at each campus, more than tripling the number of students receiving a healthy breakfast.

Summer Meal Programs

Summer Meal Programs, including the Summer Food Service Program and the Seamless Summer Option, make nutritious meals and snacks available to all children aged 18 and under during the summer. Unfortunately, only 15.3 children participate in summer meals for every 100 who receive free and reduced-price meals during the school year.[89] This data indicates children are vastly underserved in the summer months.

Summer Meal Programs offer opportunities for children to receive summer meals in three ways:

- **Summer Meal Sites**: Summer meal sites provide no cost-meals to all children 18 years and under and are served at *congregate meal sites*. A *congregate meal site* is a location where meals are served and eaten on-site, such as community centers, schools, libraries, and other central locations in the community. They may also be known as *in-person meal sites* or *group meal sites*.[90]

- **Non-Congregate Summer Meal Service**: This program allows meal providers to offer to-go meals or a meal delivery service for those in rural communities where in-person sites are not readily accessible.[91] Examples of non-congregate summer meal sites include grab-and-go or curbside meals, parent pick-up meals, and mailed meal boxes.

- **Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (Summer EBT)**: The Summer EBT program provides benefits on an electronic card (like an EBT card used by SNAP participants) eligible families can use to shop at grocery stores, farmers' markets, and online.[92] In participating states, grocery benefits are $40 per month per eligible child for three months. To see if your state participates in Summer EBT, visit: https://www.fns.usda.gov/summer/sunbucks.

Summer EBT

Case Study

In 2024, Burnet ISD, a rural Texas school district, and the Bertram Public Library teamed up to provide grab-and-go summer meals to children in the small community of Bertram every week. A week's worth of meals were packed by school district employees each week in an elementary school cafeteria, then transported to Bertram Library, where children in the community could pick up their meal packs at a weekly designated time. On average, over 100 children participated in the program every week, receiving grab-and-go summer meals in an area where operating a daily meal service program would be nearly impossible due to transportation and staffing barriers. Burnet ISD also provided weekly meal boxes for students in a smaller outlying community, where the local church picked up the meal boxes and distributed them each week at the local volunteer fire department headquarters. Community partnerships make innovative solutions like these possible, providing much needed food access to children and families when school is out.

Ensuring every eligible student participates in child nutrition programs is vital to alleviating hunger in a community. Additionally, when more eligible children eat school breakfast, school lunch, and an afterschool snack or meal, school districts receive more reimbursement funds from the government, ensuring financial sustainability, and families can experience more breathing room in their household budgets. Hunger Free Community Coalitions can engage their community through child nutrition programs in numerous ways. When determining whether this engagement is right for your community, remember to rely on the data you gathered in your landscape analysis and consider the effective strategies for implementation you will learn about in Chapter 8.

- **School Meals**: HFCCs can engage with school district nutrition staff and administration to consider new initiatives for traditional meal service models that reach more students or offer more resources. Two examples are moving breakfast service after the bell or adding after school meals to existing after school programs, such as athletics.

  There are multiple avenues for HFCCs to engage with school districts. School board meetings are open to the public and invite public comment. School nutrition staff are often open to working with community leaders and may welcome support in advocating for change. School districts in Texas are also required to form School Health Advisory Councils (SHAC). SHACs are charged with developing health policies, including physical education and nutrition. SHACs require non-school staff to be members and welcome outside voices. HFCCs can consider reaching out to members of SHACs or inviting members of SHACs to be part of the HFCC.

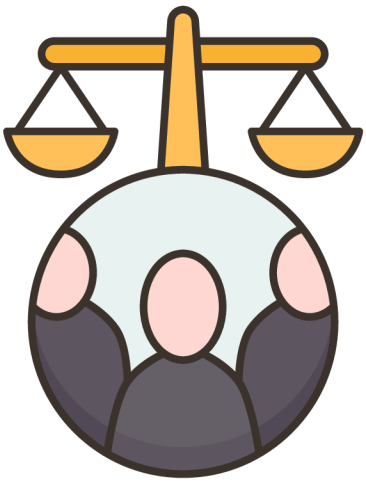
- **Summer Meals**: Hunger Free Community Coalitions can also work to alleviate child hunger by increasing participation in Summer Meal Programs. Some students, especially those in rural areas, do not live close enough to commute to summer meal sites. Additionally, many families in urban and rural contexts alike are simply unaware of the resources available to them. Either way, investing in improving summer meal programs is an attainable goal serving both children and their families.

To further understand these and other federal nutrition programs, complete Exercise 5.2 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook.*

Understanding Policy and Engaging with Policymakers

To leverage federal nutrition programs effectively, your Community Leadership Council—and eventually your HFCC—will need to build relationships with decision makers and cultivate trust and understanding with elected officials. This gives you the opportunity to both invite these policymakers to join the coalition and to have open discussions about how policy decisions impact communities.

In the landscape analysis, you discovered what federal nutrition programs are available in your community. You also examined community participation rates for the programs and whether there are gaps that prevent families from accessing them. Based on that information, as part of drafting the landscape analysis report, your CLC analyzed what actions may be necessary to ensure your community is fully leveraging federal nutrition programs. With this in mind, your CLC should aim for your coalition to establish a feedback loop with policymakers to better inform policy decisions. As a group proximate to the problem of food insecurity in your community, your coalition members will have a strong voice in enhancing the mechanics, community awareness, and community accessibility of federal nutrition programs, which directly impact your community's food security.



As mentioned above, Congress authorizes federal nutrition programs and appropriates funds for them, whereafter the USDA administers the programs, issuing regulations and distributing funds to the states. State agencies then then receive the funds from USDA and oversee program implementation, ensuring compliance with federal regulations. at each level-Congress, the USDA, and your state representatives and state agencies—you have the opportunity to build relationships with the policymakers who make decisions about funding and operating these programs. In this section, you will learn the basics about the federal legislation that governs the federal nutrition programs discussed earlier in the chapter. Then, you will examine how you can engage engage with your elected officials to share how these programs impact food security in your community.

Federal Nutrition Program Legislation

Congress authorizes federal nutrition programs and provides instructions for how they should be operated through two primary pieces of legislation: the **Farm Bill** and **Child Nutrition Reauthorization**. When working toward systemic change for your community, keep the descriptions below in mind to help you educate elected representatives and advocate for legislation that supports access to healthy food for all members of your community.

The Farm Bill[93]

The Farm Bill governs agriculture and nutrition programs. Title IV of the Farm Bill—the Nutrition Title—governs the majority of federal nutrition programs. Title IV programs* include:

- SNAP
- Food Distribution Program of Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
- The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
- Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)
- Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)
- Fresh Fruit & Vegetables Program (FFVP)
- Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (GusNIP)
- Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)

**A brief description of these programs can be found in Appendix A.*

The Farm Bill is typically reauthorized every five years; however, Congress can annually extend the bill to allow vital programs like those in Title IV to continue to operate without disruption in communities. While these extensions are important to continue providing uninterrupted services, the result sometimes means significant delays in reauthorization. As of early 2025, Congress has not reauthorized the Farm Bill in full since 2018.

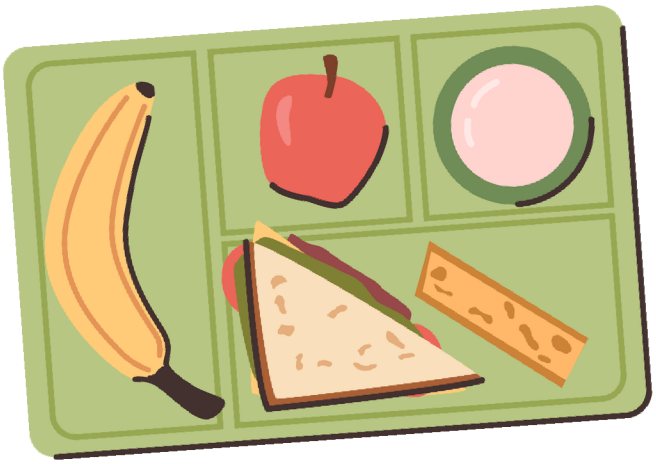
Of all the Title IV Farm Bill programs, SNAP and TEFAP are two of the most vital to communities. In fiscal year 2024, SNAP had an average of 41.7 million participants a month, costing $99.8 billion for the year, with an additional $2.29 billion funded for TEFAP—a program that provides USDA-purchased food commodities and funds to local emergency feeding organizations.[94] HFCCs should consider how they can engage policymakers to ensure those who make decisions about these programs understand their impacts in local communities.

Child Nutrition Reauthorization[95]

This legislation contains a number of federal nutrition programs that primarily impact students, women, and children. The bill last passed in 2010 was the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act* and includes the following programs:*

- National School Lunch Program
- School Breakfast Program
- Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Summer Food Service Program
- Afterschool Snack Service
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
- WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
- Special Milk Program

**A brief description of these programs can be found in Appendix A.*



Like the Farm Bill, Congress should revisit Child Nutrition Reauthorization every five years; however, unlike the Farm Bill, if Congress does not touch the bill, programs can continue to operate as usual, and incremental policy changes can be made via alternative pieces of legislation.

Advocacy in Action

Increasing the number of schools that adopt the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) serves as an example of how coalitions can engage in local advocacy to improve food access and ultimately increase food security. Schools that qualify for CEP provide all students with free lunch. This reduces barriers to children's access and increases participation by reducing the administrative burden for both parents and schools of determining which students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch and reducing the stigma students sometimes associate with free lunch. In addition to working with school staff to opt into CEP, HFCC members can also cultivate relationships and understanding with school board members and local elected officials to ensure buy in and sustained participation.

While the previous example demonstrates local advocacy that can increase CEP participation, the permanent passage of the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (Summer EBT) program illustrates that advocacy at the federal level leads to systemic change. For more than a decade, USDA allowed a limited number of states to pilot Summer EBT in select communities. Community advocates shared stories of the program's success with state and federal policymakers, and researchers who evaluated the program reported its demonstrated success. In 2023, Summer EBT became available nationwide, beginning in the summer of 2024. However, each state must elect to participate in the program. In states that are not operating Summer EBT, HFCCs can engage state officials and encourage them to adopt the program.

Engaging with Elected Officials

Noticing which programs are working well and which programs could be improved in a community are great examples of information you can give to your elected officials to improve and inform policy decisions. These examples are best received, however, when you have cultivated long-term relationships with decision makers. Relationships like these are built strategically and empathetically, through numbers and stories—or quantitative and qualitative data—to paint a trusted, accurate picture of the constituents elected officials serve.

The work of coalitions is to reduce—and even end—hunger in communities. To assist people on an individual, familial, and communal level is to know and be in relationship with not only those living with food insecurity, but also with those who have the power to make changes at the systemic level. In other words, coalitions must be engaged with their policymakers for long-term change to be achieved.

Once established, your coalition will depend on strong advocacy and collaboration to address food insecurity and drive systemic change. Understanding who represents you at the federal, state, and local levels is essential for influencing policies, securing funding, and gaining legislative support for hunger relief initiatives. Elected officials have the power to shape food assistance programs, allocate resources, and enact laws that directly impact food security efforts. By assessing your relationships with these officials, you and your coalition can identify champions for your cause, build strategic partnerships, and ensure decision makers are informed about your community's needs. Strengthening these connections enhances your ability to advocate for sustainable solutions, mobilize resources, and create lasting impact in the effort to end hunger.

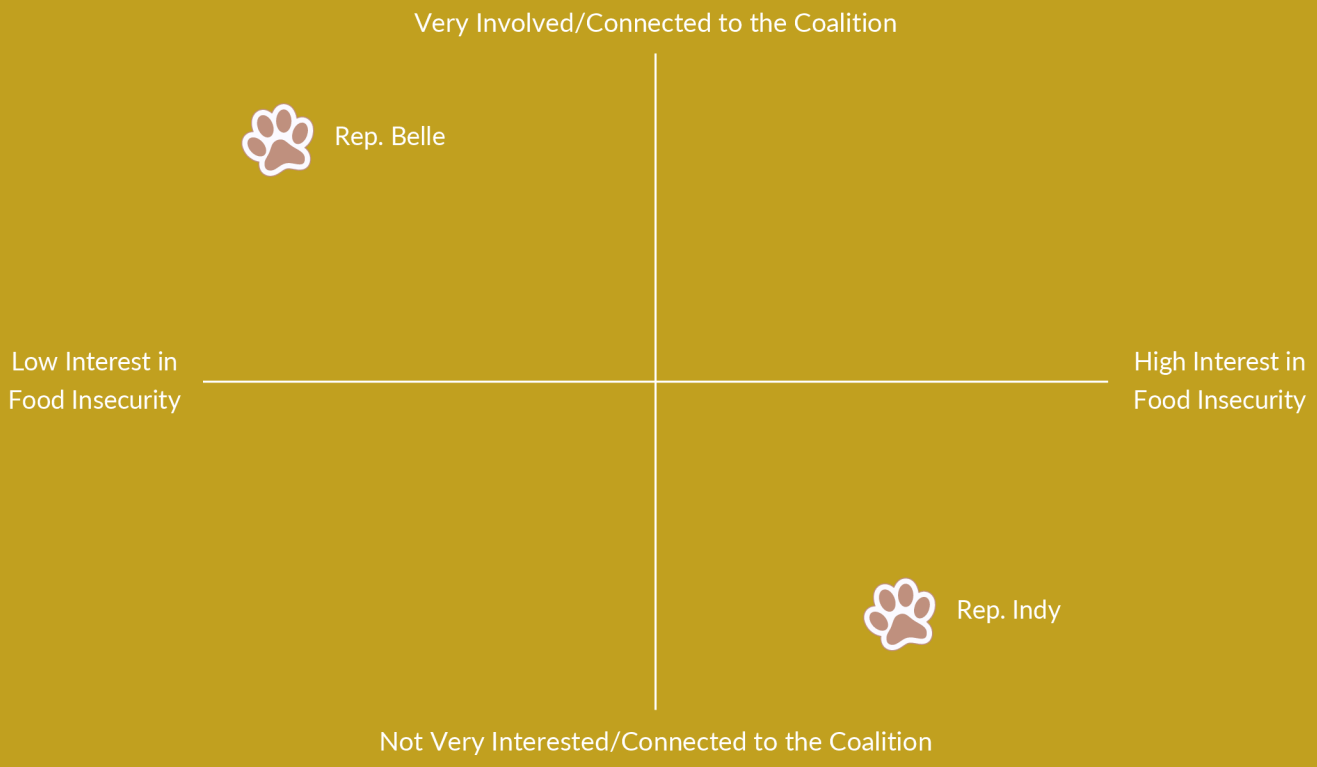
You can best decide who key decision makers are by evaluating 1) the person's interest in or passion for the issues the coalition is focusing on and 2) the person's relationship to the coalition. Determining these two factors will help you decide which key decision makers may need more education on the issue, which decision makers may need more networking and connection points, and which decision makers may not take priority.

To find out about your elected official's position toward hunger and federal nutrition programs, you can do an online search for recent legislation that addresses hunger and poverty issues and see how your elected official voted. For those serving at the federal level, visit congress.gov and search for your representative or senator and use the menu to explore actions they took on specific issues.

Engagement Evaluation Matrix[96]

Case Study: Representatives Belle and Indy

The Baylor Hunger Free Coalition deeply cares about food insecurity. Representative Belle is good friends with the Food Service Director of the local school district, who is a member of the Baylor Coalition. Rep. Belle, however, campaigned on ensuring local business development downtown. Representative Indy, on the other hand, is passionate about addressing food insecurity and brought up the cause often in his campaign; however, Rep. Indy does not have a relationship with anyone in the Baylor Coalition. While this metric may not provide a step-by-step guide on how to most effectively work with both representatives, the graph does demonstrate where coalition members might best engage to further build relationships.


Very Involved/Connected to the Coalition
Rep. Belle
Low Interest in Food Insecurity
High Interest in Food Insecurity
Rep. Indy
Not Very Interested/Connected to the Coalition

This exercise was originally developed by Dana Weekes, an advocate and champion of community voices.

To dig deeper into understanding how your elected officials engage with hunger issues, complete Exercise 5.3 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook.*

Charitable Food Assistance

In addition to federal nutrition programs, the United States has a robust network of charitable food assistance organizations that ensure individuals have access to food resources in times of need. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)[97] is a federal nutrition program operated by USDA that provides emergency food to states—which then often work with charitable food programs, like food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, and community action agencies—to distribute the food throughout communities to eligible households. In addition to TEFAP, many charitable food assistance programs rely on community resources, including funds and in-kind donations, to help individuals and families meet their food needs.

Often, the charitable food assistance programs operate within a network. Feeding America is the largest hunger-relief organization in the United States, operating a nationwide network designed to combat food insecurity at a systemic level. Founded in 1979, it now connects more than 200 food banks with 60,000 food pantries, soup kitchens, and community-based meal programs across the country.[98] Rather than directly distributing food itself, Feeding America serves as a central coordinator—sourcing surplus

What is a Food Bank?

- A **food bank** is a large, centralized warehouse or distribution center that collects, stores, and distributes food—usually donated by retailers, manufacturers, or the government—to smaller agencies like food pantries or meal programs. Food banks do not typically give food to individuals but supply organizations that do.[99]
- A **food pantry** is a local organization or site that provides free groceries directly to people in need. Pantries often receive food from food banks and allow clients to take home ingredients they can use to prepare meals. For example, a church or community center might host a weekly food pantry where families can pick up groceries.[100]
- A **soup kitchen** is a service or facility that offers prepared, hot meals—often daily or weekly—to people in need, particularly those experiencing homelessness or severe food insecurity. Unlike food pantries, soup kitchens provide ready-to-eat meals rather than groceries.[101]
- A **community-based meal program** refers to any local initiative that provides meals (prepared or in some cases meal kits) to community members. This term includes soup kitchens, senior meal programs, after-school meal sites, and mobile meal services (like Meals on Wheels). These programs are often tailored to specific groups, such as children, seniors, or rural populations.[102]

food from farmers, manufacturers, retailers, and government programs, and then redistributing it through its affiliate food banks.[103] These food banks, in turn, work with local partner agencies to ensure food reaches individuals and families in need. Each year, this coordinated system delivers over 5 billion meals, making it the backbone of charitable food distribution in the U.S.[104] In terms of revenue, Feeding America ranks as the largest U.S. charity.[105]

The charitable food assistance network in the U.S. is critical to alleviating food insecurity in the United States for two main reasons. First, charitable food assistance is cost effective. One dollar spent on charitable food assistance in the U.S. is roughly equivalent to $10 spent on SNAP.[106] In other words, the power of $1 in a local pantry has the power of $10 in SNAP benefits. Second, charitable food organizations offer help to community members in need, regardless of whether they are eligible for or participate in federal nutrition programs. When there is no food in the kitchen and no money in the bank, these local programs help to fill the gap.

As far as charitable food assistance programs go, the sky is the limit for your HFCC to provide support for your neighbors. When considering whether charitable food assistance is a good fit for your community, review the information you learned from your landscape analysis to determine whether there are populations or geographic locations that could be reached by these resources. Additionally, as with any program your HFCC will implement, keep in mind the effective strategies for program implementation you will learn in Chapter 8 to ensure your intervention is uniquely tailored to the needs of your community and respects the dignity and autonomy of all community members.

To deepen your understanding of charitable food programs, complete Exercise 5.4 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*.

Conclusion

Understanding Your Community and Resources includes a broad study of facts and statistics about your community, as well as feedback and input from community members. It also includes a robust review and understanding of charitable, local, state, and federal resources.

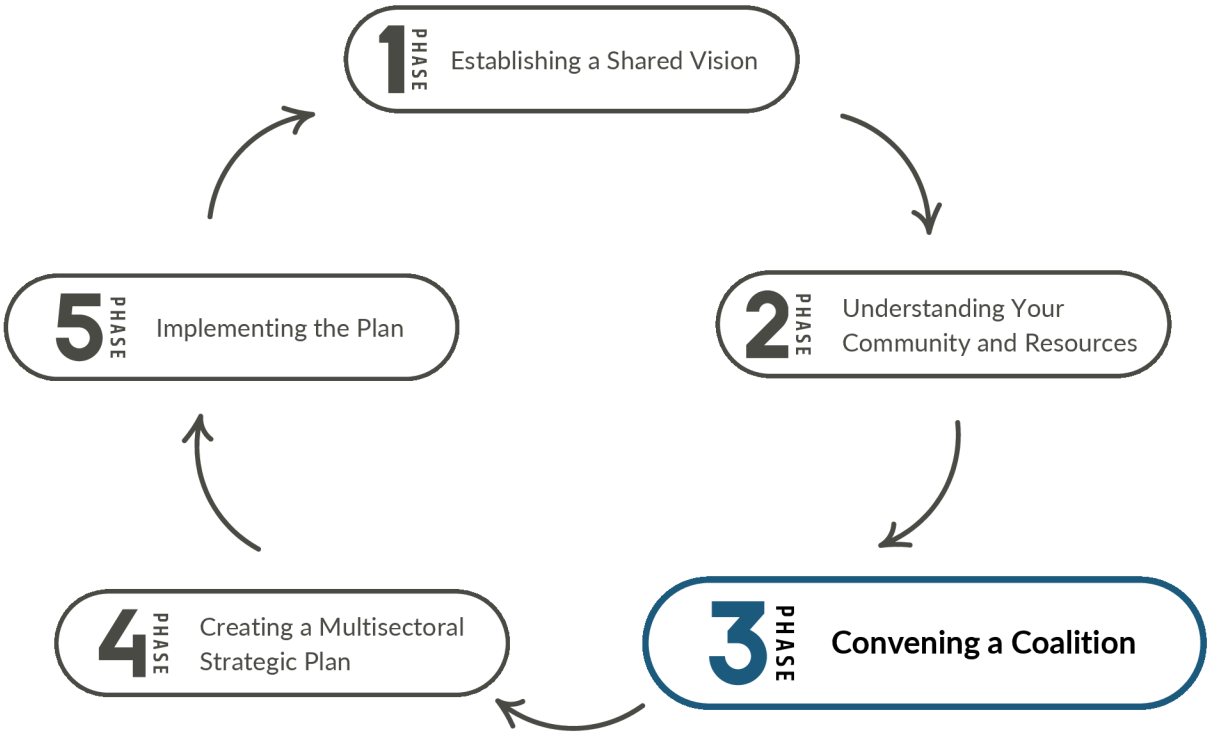
The landscape analysis report your CLC drafted and the knowledge you developed about federal nutrition and charitable assistance programs will prepare your CLC to take the next step in HFCC development as you present your landscape analysis report to the community and recruit stakeholders to join the HFCC in Phase 3: Convening a Coalition.

Phase 2: Understanding Your Community and Resources offered many opportunities to build new knowledge bases about community and federal resources. Before moving to the next chapter, take a few moments to reflect by completing Exercise 5.5 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*.

PHASE 3

CONVENING A COALITION

CHAPTER 6



After recruiting a CLC of multi-sectoral partners who share a vision and completing a Landscape Analysis Report together—including local, state, and federal resources—you are ready to engage the larger community.

Phase 3: Convening a Coalition begins by hosting a convening event—a core element of the Baylor Collaborative's Hunger Free Community model. No one sector can end hunger alone, and the convening event is a pivotal opportunity to publicly announce your coalition's formation, disseminate the data you accumulated in the landscape analysis during Phase 2, and invite multisectoral collaborators to take action.

The initial convening event is designed to propel the coalition to action. First, the event gives your CLC an opportunity to release the results from the landscape analysis to the public, establishing rapport and trust. Second, it provides an opportunity to unite the community around a common cause, building a group grounded in listening and learning. Third, the event provides a natural transition from forming the HFCC to selecting priority areas and organizing action teams (discussed in Chapter 7), thus laying a foundation for mutually reinforcing activities.

The convening event must fit the scope and scale of your community and its resources. It can range from a town hall style event, taking place in a single evening, to a conference style event that features speakers and draws key stakeholders, such as potential corporate sponsors and health, school, and civic leadership.

Convening events educate the community about hunger, an issue that often goes unseen but, as Dr. Jeremy Everett has noted, is inherently solvable. Importantly, the convening event is invitational, creating a space to inspire and invite other community members and organizations to join the cause rather than require or pressure them into involvement. As a result, you are likely to discover unexpected partners who bring something unique to the table in the cause to end hunger in your community.

Why Host a Convening Event?

Sharing and Cultivating a Common Vision: Convening events are an ideal place to broadly share the findings of the landscape analysis and cultivate a common vision for food security work in the community. Because it is invitational, it also can engage broader community interest in the topic of hunger. Hosting a hunger-focused event in the early stages of coalition formation inspires participation by a wider range of stakeholders. This gathering may also help your coalition determine priority areas and launch action teams, which you will learn more about in Chapter 7.

Networking and Learning: Convenings bring together all the organizations in your community connected to food security initiatives, promoting collaboration and highlighting the value of working together. By bringing together interested parties in one place at one time, participants engage with other organizations in the community doing similar work and learn that by working together, they can accomplish goals not achievable alone.

This phase in forming a coalition can also provide a strategic means of engaging with your local elected officials. If they participated in the landscape analysis process, this gathering allows the conversation to continue to develop. You may consider asking your local elected official to host the event, which could draw more community participation and help establish trust.

Further, a convening event affords an opportunity to offer attendees multiple types of learning experiences all in one event. The meeting may include a time for networking, keynote speakers, panels of local leaders, or breakout sessions for learning more about a special interest.

Motivating and Inspiring: The appropriate speakers can both inform and inspire a broad range of attendees. By appealing to different groups and stakeholder interests, speakers can accelerate the work of your coalition by informing and inspiring others to get involved.

Food security work can be overwhelming. Making the event a regular part of your coalition's work can help rejuvenate and show appreciation to those in your community who have been working in this space for a long time.

Recruiting Stakeholders to Attend a Convening Event

A convening event allows you to recruit stakeholders to be part of the coalition and carry out the coalition's work beyond just the CLC. The strategies you learned in Chapter 3 to identify and recruit stakeholders to the CLC apply during this phase as well.

To determine who you will invite to the convening event, return to the stakeholder list you created during Phase 2 as a starting point. Then, make sure to add other stakeholders your CLC met during the landscape analysis process.

As discussed in Chapter 3, one of the keys to a shared vision is supporting the whole community. This means intentionally reviewing your landscape analysis report and inviting populations in your community who may be experiencing hunger, as well as those individuals who contributed data to the landscape report, to participate in the convening event. Additionally, as you build your invitation list, review the three pillars of a successful HFCC - multisectoral collaboration, shared power, and collective impact - to ensure your stakeholder list includes individuals from different sectors in the community who have a variety of assets to contribute to the coalition.

Complete Exercise 6.1 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook* to create your list of potential attendees.

How to Plan and Implement a Convening Event

A convening event does not have to be a large, formal gathering to achieve its purpose. However, even small events require planning well in advance and should involve as many stakeholders as possible to be successful.

> "Planning is key to the success of an event. The Tom Green County Hunger Coalition has developed a checklist, so none of the many aspects of planning are forgotten. Things to consider are choosing a topic or theme, finding a venue, finding sponsorships, inviting speakers, designing a Save the Date and program, sending out invitations, handling registrations, making travel arrangements for the speakers, decorating the venue, organizing the agenda for the day, ordering lunch (if your event goes all day), making each participant feel welcomed, and conducting an evaluation."
>
> *-Mary Herbert, West Texas Regional Director (retired)*
> *Baylor Collaborative*

Plan well in advance around the following areas:

- Selecting a theme
- Reserving a venue
- Choosing and inviting speakers
- Engaging in fundraising events to cover costs
- Developing a marketing and communications strategy and timeline
- Securing technology
- Disseminating information (e.g., printed reports to share, program notes)
- Offering hospitality – food, transportation, translators, hotel room blocks
- Creating a post-event evaluation
- Writing thank you notes
- Deciding on a timeline and method of enrolling participants, including collecting conference registration fees if charging them

Don't Forget to Record Qualitative Data at Your Event!

Collecting qualitative data about hunger in your community does not stop when the landscape analysis report is complete. If your convening event offers opportunities for participants to give feedback, make sure you are collecting it in a way that is consistent with the skills you learned. As you plan your event, take a moment to review the *Step 3: Engage Strategies to Listen to Community Voices (Qualitative Data)* section in Chapter 4.

Use the tools in Exercises 6.2 and 6.3 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook* to help you plan your first convening event.

Post-Event Action Steps

To ensure conversations and connections initiated at the gathering do not lose momentum, your CLC should complete the following steps immediately after the convening concludes:

1. Invite interested stakeholders to an upcoming meeting to help the CLC develop the coalition's strategic plan. The activity for this meeting and process is outlined in Chapter 7.
2. Email everyone to remind them all are welcome to participate in coalition meetings, and invite them to the next meeting.
3. Leverage the momentum and energy from the convening to begin identifying potential action team leaders – those who express interest, expertise, or passion for a specific topic (e.g., child hunger, senior hunger, food insecurity policy, or nutrition education). You will learn more about forming action teams in Chapter 7.

Tom Green County Hunger Coalition

Case Study

The Tom Green County Hunger Coalition has convened a West Texas Hunger Summit every year since 2014. The summit is a highly effective means of bringing anti-poverty and food security organizations from across West Texas together to network, hear effective strategies, and gather project ideas they can implement in their own communities. Based on participant feedback, the coalition experiments with different formats for its hunger summits, including: keynote speakers and breakout sessions; keynotes and presenters on effective strategies with no breakout sessions; and an online virtual summit, especially effective during the pandemic. Additionally, participants complete a food security project during the summit, such as packing food boxes and putting together soup kits for local pantries. Time spent at a hunger summit that informs and produces a meaningful and tangible result encourages and builds rapport between participants.

Want to see an example of a "Planning Sheet" the Tom Green County Hunger Coalition used to plan it's summit? Visit, https://baylor.box.com/shared/static/vhkhmnbb4dq72f3drwldas1tr4b0vthu.docx.

Conclusion

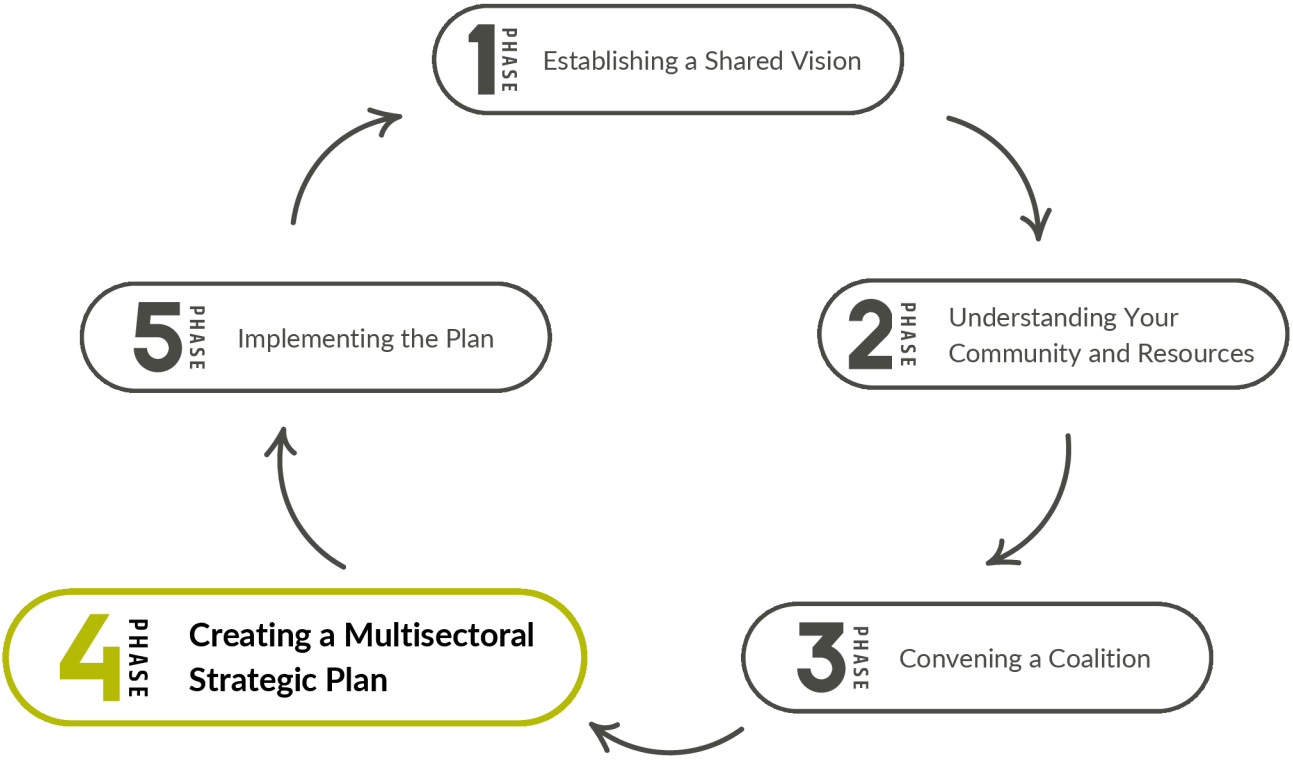
A successful convening event allows you to share your landscape analysis report with your community, generate wider interest in and support for the coalition, and issue a call to action. You CLC should immediately follow up with the post-event action steps, which will create the foundations for Phase 4 of forming your HFCC, creating a multisectoral strategic plan.

Are you ready to host your first convening event? Use Exercise 6.4 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook* to record your thoughts as you consider what a successful first event looks like for you and those who participate.

PHASE 4

CREATING A MULTISECTORAL STRATEGIC PLAN

CHAPTER 7



Following your successful convening event, your CLC will begin formalizing the coalition's structure. Creating a multisectoral strategic plan—the focus of Phase 4—will allow your coalition to move forward by building infrastructure and determining key priority areas.

At this point, your CLC has not yet formalized the coalition. Key steps remain, including selecting leadership, establishing a leadership structure, building infrastructure, and defining priority areas and the first project. After your initial convening, more stakeholders will express interest in joining the coalition, expanding representation in the decision-making process. This broader involvement strengthens cohesiveness and buy-in, as diverse community voices help shape the coalition through the strategic planning process.

What is a Strategic Plan?

A strategic plan is a written document that formalizes the coalition's structure, priorities, and action steps, ensuring everyone in the coalition understands the group's purpose, priorities, and means of functioning.

A written strategic plan also provides the means to track progress and evaluate impact by setting out clear goals and agreed upon metrics for evaluating the efficacy of coalition work. In addition to serving as an internal document to guide the coalition's work, a written strategic plan can also be a way to share the coalition's plans with the broader community and solicit support of volunteers, in-kind assistance, and financial support.

7 Elements of a Strategic Plan

Below are the key elements your coalition's strategic plan should include. This chapter will explore each of these elements in detail:

1. Coalition name, mission statement, and geographic scope
2. Priority areas
3. Action teams
4. Leadership structure
5. Decision-making guidelines
6. Logic models that reflect specific action plans
7. Landscape analysis report (covered in Chapter 4)

Additionally, you may want to include other elements in your strategic plan, such as:

- Organizational rules or by-laws
- Ground rules for meetings
- Goals and timelines: short-term, mid-term, long-term
- Communication plan for announcing and reporting activities to members and the larger community
- Funding and fundraising plan
- Staffing plan
- Evaluation metrics and assessment timelines
- Communication plan for reporting goals, work, and progress of core leadership team and action teams or working groups to members and the larger community

Choosing a Fiscal Agent

If your HFCC does not have IRS 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, you may not be able to receive money from foundations and many other sources. Therefore, your HFCC will need an external organization to serve as the HFCC's fiscal agent. Many times, this same organization can also serve as the HFCC's coordinating backbone organization, receiving and expending funds on behalf of the coalition and providing administrative support. If your HFCC is not a 501(c)(3) and does not have a backbone organization, consider asking a participating organization to serve as your HFCC's fiscal agent. (For a refresher on administrative backbone support, review the Five Components of Collective Impact on page 16.)

1 Developing a Name, Mission Statement, and Geographic Scope

Your HFCC's name, mission, and geographic scope will communicate the coalition's goals and values, shaping the direction of the coalition. Developing these definitional elements is a powerful way for people to gain a sense of ownership of the coalition. For some coalitions, the CLC will make decisions about these three elements, then gain broader consensus by presenting them to a larger group. However, some communities may experience broader buy-in by giving a larger group of stakeholders a voice in this process.

Mission Statement

Mission statements are usually short (one to three sentence) statements that act like a compass for all decisions and activities the coalition undertakes. The statement should be broad enough to encompass a potentially wide range of activities and interests, yet specific enough to keep coalitions aligned with their purpose. The following are examples of coalition mission statements:

- "The Denton Hunger Coalition is a collaborative of city, state, government, nonprofit and community agencies dedicated to addressing hunger in Denton County. We coordinate hunger relief efforts and facilitate programs that address the issue."

- "The Burnet County Hunger Alliance is a volunteer group of food pantries, churches, school administrators, elected officials, area leaders and active citizens who have committed to end hunger in Burnet County. The alliance helps coordinate and direct local residents to existing resources and find gaps in community services, with the broader goal being that everyone in Burnet County receives three healthy meals daily."

When coalitions have separate, long-term action teams, or working groups, it may be necessary for each of them to create mission statements that support the mission of the larger coalition. This creates a clear focus on the issue and develops buy-in and connection to the coalition at the action team level. (Action teams are discussed in more detail in a few pages.)

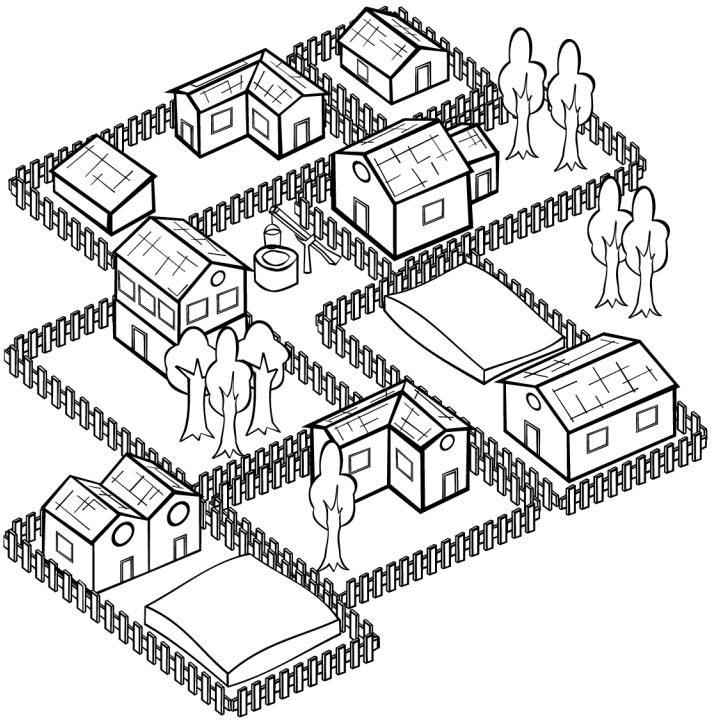
The Dallas Coalition for Hunger Solutions has four Action Teams with individual mission statements:

- Senior Hunger Action Team: Increase access for seniors to nutritious food.
- Urban Agriculture Action Team: Increase opportunities and support for urban food production in Dallas.
- Faith Community Hunger Solutions Action Team: Equip congregations to implement effective strategies as hunger solutions, especially among older adults and children.
- Public Policy Action Team: Promote strong federal, state, and local public policies to improve healthy and equitable food access.

For a step-by-step guide to drafting a mission statement, refer to Exercise 7.1 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*.

Geographic Scope

Many coalitions focus on a city, county, or regional footprint. However, your HFCC may decide to focus on your immediate neighborhood. As coalition membership grows, this may be a key first topic to discuss. Not only does this define your area of work, but it will also guide recruitment efforts for potential stakeholders.



2 Determining Priority Areas

Your coalition should determine its priority areas in light of community interests and available leadership. Successfully determining the coalition's priority areas requires a thorough study of the landscape analysis to understand current programs addressing food insecurity, identify existing gaps and barriers in services that need to be addressed, and select priorities that both reflect and generate community interest.

Additionally, it is critical to select priority areas your HFCC has the capacity to support. In addition to choosing priorities that resonate with a significant segment of the coalition's membership, it is vital that at least one person is willing to assume a leadership role in any project or activity from each priority area. When determining which leaders will guide the coalition's projects and activities, keep in mind the Shared Power Principle, so project leadership represents voices from the whole community. Because you have intentionally assembled stakeholders representing multiple sectors and populations from within the community, the coalition can leverage a variety of assets to support each action team area.

The following considerations are useful in determining coalition projects and activities:

- How does this project or activity connect to the determined priority areas?
- How will the impact of this activity be measured?
- How much of an impact will this activity have on helping the community?
- Is this an activity that would benefit from a collaborative approach by multiple organizations or individuals, or could one organization or individual do it alone?
- What is the likelihood of successful implementation?
- Do we currently have the resources to implement the activity, or would it require bringing in new resources?
- How long will it take to implement this activity successfully?
- Will this activity help the coalition engage new members and build support for the coalition?

Examples of Coalition Priority Areas

The following are examples of coalition priority areas, along with projects or activities implemented based on priority area:

Coordinating emergency food assistance.

Potential projects include:

- Developing a resource guide or calendar for the community
- Coordinating a weekend food backpack program for schools
- Supporting individuals with limited resources with wraparound services to help them meet goals

Increasing participation in SNAP and WIC.

Potential projects include:

- Developing education and outreach programs
- Assisting local farmers' markets in accepting SNAP and WIC

Increasing participation in child nutrition programs.

Potential projects include:

- Working with local school districts to create outreach and awareness for school breakfast, afterschool meals, and summer meal programs
- Advocating for the importance of school meal programs

Increasing nutritious food intake.

Potential projects include:

- Developing nutrition education programs
- Creating health and hunger pilots, where nutritious food is prescribed for food insecure patients
- Improving healthy food options at corner stores, bodegas, and gas stations in food deserts

Complete Exercise 7.2 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*, either on your own or as a group, to help you determine key priority areas for your HFCC.

3 Developing Action Teams

Action-oriented coalitions create action teams focused on different areas to organize the work of the coalition. Action teams leverage the lived experience, expertise, and special interest areas of coalition members by strategically recruiting leaders. Additionally, new members may also be engaged who are drawn to a particular issue. For example, an action team focused on child hunger might specifically interest people who work in school districts or with afterschool programs.

Action teams bring people together to collaboratively design and implement activities, events, or interventions. Individuals and organizations engaged through action teams often contribute their time, lived experience, expertise, and resources to the work. This is where the benefit of multisectoral collaboration can especially be seen. With stakeholders from various organizations, backgrounds, and sectors, a coalition can create solutions that benefit from the varied assets of its members.

Coalitions may choose to activate standing action teams and/or short-term action teams. There are some advantages to time-limited action teams. For example, short-term action teams may encourage the involvement of members with limited availability or allow others to participate in multiple projects throughout the year. Smaller coalitions may appreciate the flexibility of short-term action teams while larger coalitions may use short-term action teams as subgroups within a standing action team.

Coalitions may establish action teams at any gathering that allows ample time for brainstorming and voting. The convening event you hosted during Phase 3 presents an ideal opportunity to harness interest and recruit people to action teams. In-person gatherings are generally more successful in ensuring equitable participation and engaging coalition members in active brainstorming. However, online meetings may be a necessary option, particularly in rural areas where members may have to drive long distances to meet.

Action teams are most successful with a chair or co-chairs to support the direction of the team's work. This will ensure there is timely communication within the action team and with the leadership team of the coalition. In the integrated leadership structure model, discussed next, most action team chairs are also part of the leadership team of the coalition.

4 Determining a Leadership Structure

Determining a leadership structure formalizes the coalition for sustainability and future success. Coalitions can have varying structures, but it is important they have a leadership team comprised of more than just one or two people to ensure broad ownership and long-term sustainability. Two successful approaches you may consider are either a two-tiered leadership structure or an integrated leadership structure.

Two-tiered Leadership Structure: In this structure, the leadership team primarily consists of a diverse group of multisectoral action team chairs who meet regularly to guide the direction of the coalition. The leadership team adds or removes action teams over time as needed when projects begin and end. As the coalition develops, additional individuals or organizations can be invited to join the leadership team, either to serve as action team chairs or to contribute in other ways. Action teams consist of the chair and other coalition members who meet separately and typically focus on one priority area or project.

Integrated Leadership Structure: A group of elected leaders (i.e. president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary) plans and leads regular coalition meetings open to all coalition members. The leaders may also simultaneously serve as action team chairs or members. Often coalitions in smaller communities use this approach because there may not be enough leaders and/or participating organizations to have separate leadership team meetings. Having all members together at one meeting may also make it easier for community members to participate in the coalition. The action teams consist of the chair and other coalition members and typically focus on one priority area or project.

To select a leadership structure, the CLC can propose a structure to other coalition members and use consensus-based decision making to vote on the proposed structure.

Follow the prompts in Exercise 7.3 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook* to determine which leadership structure is right for your HFCC.

5 Creating Open, Consensus-Based Decision Making

Agreed upon communication protocols are important to the healthy functioning of any leadership team. As leadership structures begin to formalize, it will be important to establish how leadership makes decisions.

Consensus-based decision making is a cooperative process in which all group members develop and agree to support a decision in the best interest of the whole.[107] In consensus-based decision making, the input of every participant is carefully considered, and there is a good faith effort to address all legitimate concerns.

A consensus-based approach to making group decisions is deliberate. Although a consensus-based decision is not necessarily a reflection of complete group unanimity, effective consensus building will result in decisions that are thoughtfully discussed and incorporate diverse experiences and views. The advantage of using consensus-based decision making—compared to a different method, like majority rule voting—is that consensus-based decisions are based on the premise that everyone's voice is valued and worth being heard.[108]

Establishing group agreements for coalition meetings can make it easy to facilitate meetings using a consensus-oriented process. With established ground rules, coalition members work together effectively and respectfully. For an example of a group agreement, review the Minnesota Department of Administration's Office of Collaboration and Dispute Resolution's *Group Agreements for Collaborative Processes* (https://mn.gov/admin/assets/0060_Group%20agreements%20for%20collaborative%20processes_tcm36-605497.pdf).[109]

A flow chart adapted from Seeds for Change[110] shows an easy-to-follow, consensus-based decision-making process.

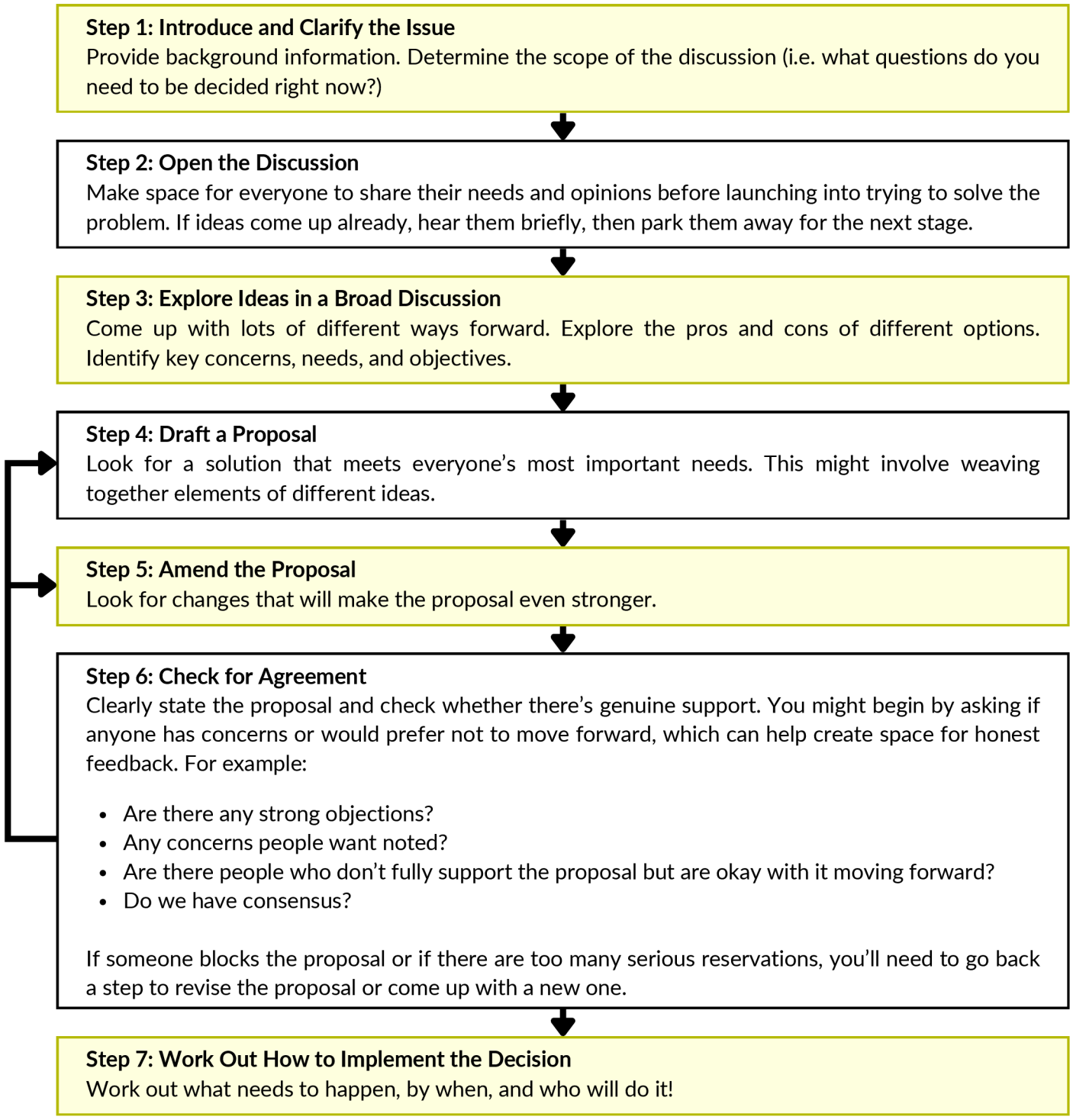

Step 1: Introduce and Clarify the Issue
Provide background information. Determine the scope of the discussion (i.e. what questions do you need to be decided right now?)
Step 2: Open the Discussion
Make space for everyone to share their needs and opinions before launching into trying to solve the problem. If ideas come up already, hear them briefly, then park them away for the next stage.
Step 3: Explore Ideas in a Broad Discussion
Come up with lots of different ways forward. Explore the pros and cons of different options. Identify key concerns, needs, and objectives.
Step 4: Draft a Proposal
Look for a solution that meets everyone's most important needs. This might involve weaving together elements of different ideas.
Step 5: Amend the Proposal
Look for changes that will make the proposal even stronger.
Step 6: Check for Agreement
Clearly state the proposal and check whether there's genuine support. You might begin by asking if anyone has concerns or would prefer not to move forward, which can help create space for honest feedback. For example:
Are there any strong objections?
Any concerns people want noted?
Are there people who don't fully support the proposal but are okay with it moving forward?
Do we have consensus?
If someone blocks the proposal or if there are too many serious reservations, you'll need to go back a step to revise the proposal or come up with a new one.
Step 7: Work Out How to Implement the Decision
Work out what needs to happen, by when, and who will do it!

Figure 11: Adapted from Seeds for Change. (2020). Introduction to consensus decision making: A short guide to collaborative decision-making for activist groups, co-ops and communities. https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/shortconsensus

Dallas Coalition for Hunger Solutions

Case Study

The Dallas Coalition for Hunger Solutions started with the development of a leadership team that now consists of individuals representing ten different organizations. The leadership team has a consensus-based approach to decision making, with facilitation of each meeting rotating month to month. The leadership team together sets and approves the budget for the coalition, determines any changes to coalition policy or structure, and decides whether to invite new members. Any member can suggest items to be added to meeting agendas. As issues arise that require more in-depth discussion, leadership team members volunteer to lead short-term committees to report back to the whole leadership team for final decision making. This open process combined with a relationship-based and collegial environment encourages members to become invested in the coalition and committed for the long-term.

Strategic Planning DOs and DON'Ts

These DOs and DON'Ts of strategic planning ensure the strategic planning process helps build trust, a common vision, and collaborative next steps.

- Divide tasks so as many people as possible are involved.
- Make plans to share the mission publicly.
- Ensure the plan is in a format that can be easily accessed and revised.
- Celebrate wins and continue to review the plan as the coalition makes progress.

- Create the strategic plan just to cross it off the list.
- Let the strategic plan sit in a drawer; review and revise regularly.
- Be afraid to have each action team create its own logic model; these can help align all contributors with the strategic plan.

6 Logic Models

Given the varied perspectives and resources involved, a logic model is an essential tool for strategic planning, providing a structured framework that aligns efforts, clarifies objectives, and ensures accountability. By mapping inputs, activities, outputs, and expected outcomes, coalitions can track progress, measure impact, and refine strategies as needed. A well-developed logic model helps stakeholders stay focused on shared goals while fostering collaboration and long-term sustainability, making it a powerful roadmap for achieving meaningful change.

A logic model is a visual representation or diagram that outlines how a program, project, activity or intervention is designed to work. While logic models can take many forms, most have four features:[111]

Inputs: the resources that are available and/or needed to enact a program (e.g., staff, number of volunteers, funding)

Activities: the concrete actions the initiative requires (e.g., send an informational flyer, reserve a venue)

Outputs: the direct results of an organization's activities (e.g., number of garden plots created, number of people who took a cooking class)

Outcomes: the goals or intended changes. Think of this as the impact the intervention is intended to have in the short-term, intermediate, and long-term (e.g., short-term: greater awareness of prevalence of food security in the community; intermediate: generate support for the coalition within a specific amount of time; long-term: support the coalition with annual funding)

A logic model shows the relationships between inputs (resources), activities (what is done), outputs (what is produced), and outcomes (short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals). Essentially, it maps out the reasoning behind why a program is expected to succeed in achieving its goals, while also mapping the concrete steps showing how those goals will be achieved.

Logic models are useful for both new and existing programs and initiatives because they identify appropriate, doable outcomes that can be measured.[112] They also can be easily adapted for a wide variety of tasks and initiatives. On the next page, Figure 12 provides an example of a logic model illustrating collaborative work toward healthy food access.

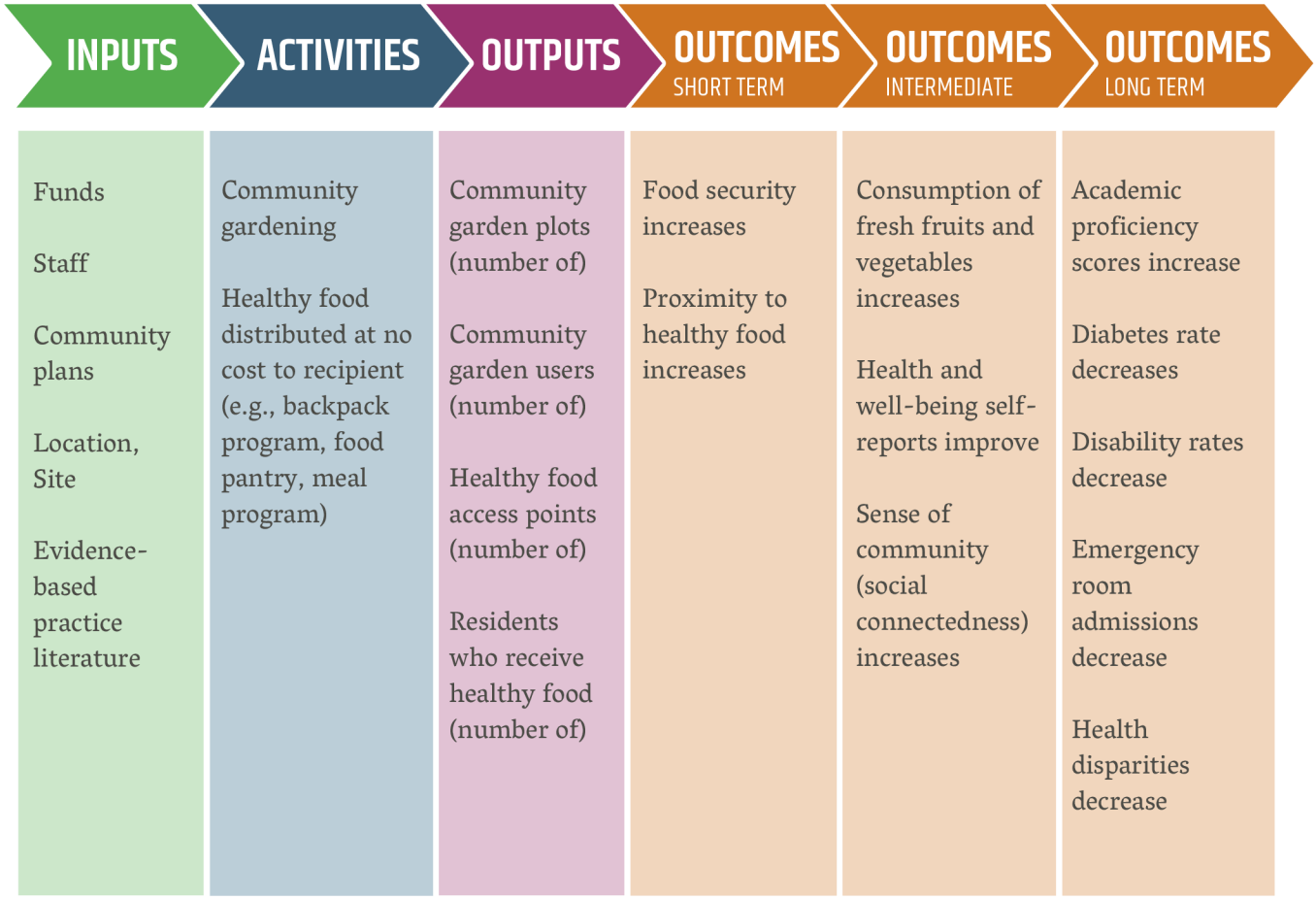


Figure 12: Adapted from Wilder Research and the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. (2018). Healthy Food Access logic model. Metrics for Healthy Communities. https://metricsforhealthycommunities.org/logic-models/healthy-food-access[113]

As a coalition's efforts are being determined during the strategic planning process, a logic model can provide an excellent framework for getting started. Additionally, if the program is already under way, a logic model can help describe, modify, evaluate, or enhance it. Below are three resources for logic model templates and examples.

- **Metrics for Healthy Communities**: https://metricsforhealthycommunities.org/logic-models/healthy-food-access
- **Food For All Logic Model**: https://americorps.gov/sites/default/files/document/202F94~1.PDF
- **Produce Prescription Logic Model**: https://www.nutritionincentivehub.org/media/tyjldghk/produce-prescription-implementation-logic-model.pdf

Ready to create your own logic model? Turn to Exercise 7.4 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook* for a step-by-step guide.

Conclusion

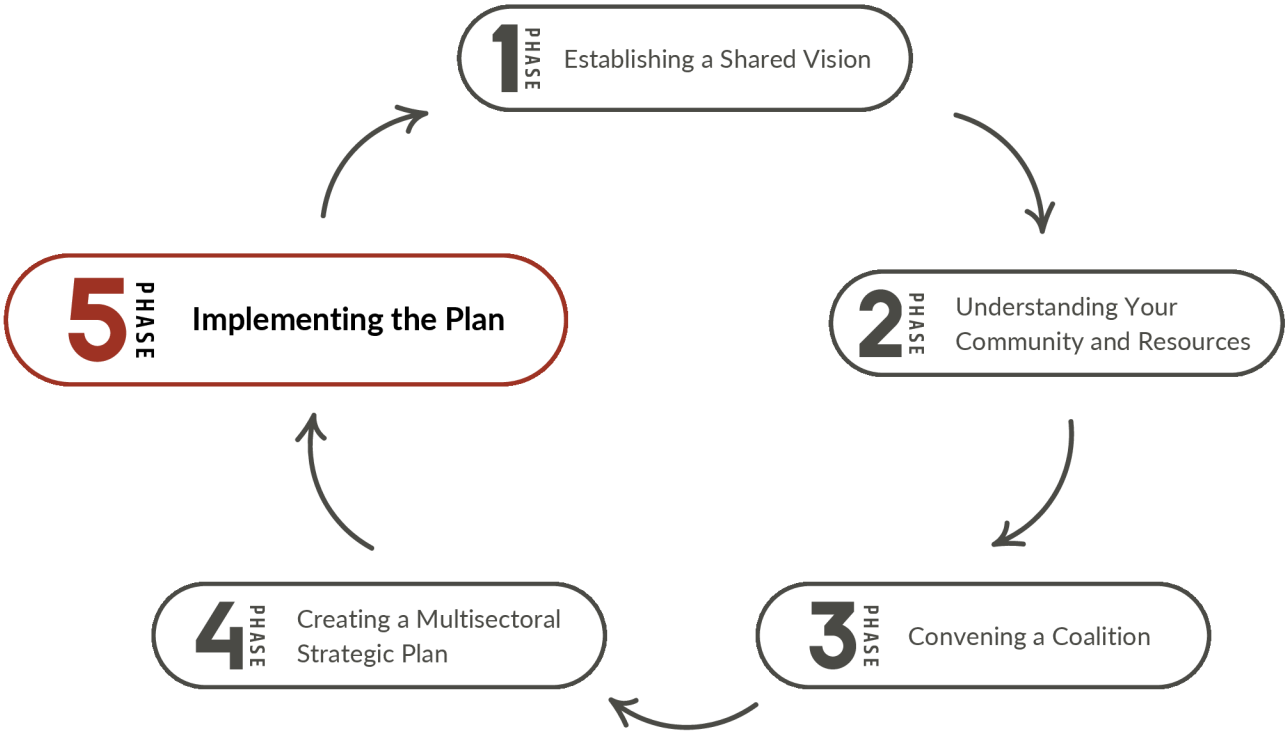
The multisectoral strategic plan is your HFCC's roadmap to lasting change in the community. With continuous engagement and communication while creating the strategic plan, the coalition will continue to build trust as it begins to implement activities laid out in this plan. In the next chapter, we will examine key considerations and strategies as your coalition moves on to Phase 5: Implementing the Plan.

Before you move on to the final chapter, take a few moments to reflect on what you learned about creating a multisectoral strategic plan by completing Exercise 7.5 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook.*

PHASE 5

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

CHAPTER 8



With a strategic plan in place, your Hunger Free Community Coalition is now at the exciting point of translating research and planning into action! During Phase 5: Implementing the Plan, you will implement effective and data-driven steps towards sustainability and future growth.

In this chapter, you will review key concepts that will help your HFCC implement its strategic plan, along with guidance on how to continually evaluate your coalition's interventions and development. You will also explore how to develop a fundraising strategy, so your coalition can sustain its impact long term.

Keys to Effective Implementation

As your newly formed HFCC begins to implement plans, continue to prioritize these key strategies. Many of these concepts have been introduced in previous phases but are equally important now as plans start taking shape. The following sections provide a more detailed review of these strategies.

Be action and results oriented.

Make sure the coalition's plan has action items that can be monitored and assessed through qualitative or quantitative measures (see the Evaluating Coalition Interventions and Impact section on page 93 for more guidance).

Prioritize multisectoral involvement.

Ensure multiple organizations are involved and feel ownership of the coalition and its work. Additionally, ensure the organizations involved are from a broad spectrum across sectors to provide diversity of resources, expertise, and ownership by the community as a whole. (See Chapter 2 for a refresher on multisectoral collaboration.)

Engage people who may be experiencing food insecurity.

Include people who have experienced or are experiencing food insecurity as participants and leaders. Engaging people in leadership roles in the coalition with this experience enhances the talents and assets they already bring to the table. (Refer back to the discussion of the Shared Power Principle in Chapter 2 and the tools for engaging the whole community in Chapter 4.)

Revisit your landscape analysis regularly.

Your landscape analysis report will continue to be a reliable tool your coalition will turn to time and again to understand your community and guide your decision making. However, your landscape analysis is not evergreen. As your community changes, so will its specific assets, gaps, resources, and needs. Intentionally build a regular review of your landscape analysis into your coalition's rhythm, so you will be able to assess when the landscape analysis needs to be updated. (Refer back to Chapter 4: Understanding Your Community to refresh your data gathering and asset mapping skills.)

Make sure mechanisms exist for mutual accountability.

Develop a process for regular progress reporting from those who have taken on tasks or responsibilities. Establish a clear coalition structure that promotes multiple leadership roles, dispersed responsibility, and mutual accountability. Ensure leadership is comprised of multiple people and organizations that have significant responsibilities and long-term tasks to maintain continuity and achieve coalition goals. (Review the Determining Leadership Structure section in Chapter 7 for more guidance.)

Use an open, consensus-based approach to group decision making.

Some participants may be more reluctant to speak than others due to barriers related to group cohesion, language, education level, or personality type, so determine protocols for decision making that ensure all stakeholders have a voice in the conversation. Ensure one or two people are not dominating discussions and decision making. Prioritize determining meeting design and methods of feedback so all members are able to speak into the work of the coalition. (Review the Creating Open, Consensus-based Decision Making section in Chapter 7 for more guidance.)

Implement an asset-based approach to project development.

When developing projects and interventions for the coalition, ensure you look not only at the needs of the community, but also at its resources and assets. Focus project development on how to better utilize or build on existing resources and assets. Engage community leaders and members in determining what issues are of most interest. Select projects strategically based on whether leadership exists to support the initiative. Even if an issue is a high priority, efforts are unlikely to succeed without a strong and committed leader. (Refer to the Developing Action Teams section in Chapter 7 for more guidance.)

Utilize a multi-pronged approach to tackling food insecurity and healthy food access.

Encourage the coalition to take on more than one issue at a time to diversify focus and to better address food insecurity. This approach also increases the chances that diverse organizations and individuals will be involved. Undertaking more than one project to keep the coalition's focus on food security will help promote long-term coalition sustainability. (See the next section, Implementing Action Items, for more guidance.)

Conducting regular self-evaluation for improvement and accountability.

Engage regularly in self-evaluation of progress based on shared metrics. Review logic models and strategic planning on a regular basis. This can provide critical opportunities to adjust timelines, plans, and goals. Ask the important and hard questions during evaluations.

- What is going well?
- What can we celebrate?
- Are we completing tasks on time?
- Are we using all assets?
- Do we have the necessary funding?
- Do we have the necessary people power?
- Do we need to ask for more information from the community?

(See the Evaluating Coalition Interventions and Impact discussion below for more guidance.)

Achieve long-term sustainability through staff support and financial resources.

From the beginning, ensure the coalition has administrative backbone support. It is challenging for volunteer members of action teams and coalition leadership to attend to administrative tasks, especially as the coalition grows. Ensure strategic plans and logic models assess financial resources necessary for sustainability and plan to raise funds to address these challenges (see the Implementing Financial Sustainability section on page 96 for more guidance).

Evaluating Coalition Interventions and Impact

As coalitions transition from planning to implementation, evaluation becomes a vital tool for measuring community impact and ensuring accountability. Building on the foundational landscape analysis work outlined in Chapter 4: Understanding the Community, such as identifying local needs, assets, and gaps, your coalition is now positioned to apply those insights to track the effectiveness of their strategies. The same data sources and community relationships used to conduct the landscape analysis—where you learned to collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data—can support ongoing monitoring of progress.

A structured evaluation process that includes identifying measurable goals, collecting and tracking relevant data, analyzing results, and sharing findings helps coalitions determine whether their interventions are working, where adjustments are needed, and how to tell their story of impact. This transparency not only builds trust with the community but also strengthens the coalition's ability to secure future funding and partnerships. Evaluation is not an endpoint; it's a continuous feedback loop that reinforces learning, alignment, and long-term sustainability.

No matter the size or resources of a coalition, evaluation remains an essential practice. Coalitions with varying capacities can tailor their evaluation methods to fit their available time, staffing, and expertise

while still gaining valuable insights. If your coalition is small and volunteer-led, you can use simple tools, such as participant surveys at community food distributions or monthly tally sheets to track the number of households served. You can also conduct informal interviews with food pantry clients or school staff to capture qualitative feedback on emerging needs or improvements. In contrast, if your coalition is larger, you may have the infrastructure to conduct more complex, longitudinal studies or collaborate with academic partners to analyze trends. Regardless of the approach, choosing appropriate evaluation methods ensures all coalitions—from grassroots efforts to countywide collaborations—can demonstrate progress, refine their work, and continue to advocate for food security with evidence-based credibility.

Ultimately, coalitions that commit to data-driven decision making are better positioned to achieve lasting impact. By regularly using data to guide actions—whether it is refining outreach strategies, adjusting program models, or reallocating limited resources—coalitions can respond more effectively to community needs. This intentional approach not only increases the likelihood of meeting stated goals but also builds a culture of continuous learning and adaptation. Funders, partners, and community members are more likely to invest in and support coalitions that can clearly demonstrate results and articulate why certain decisions are made.

Evaluation is not a separate task—it is a strategic asset that strengthens the coalition's credibility, sharpens its focus, and drives meaningful, measurable progress toward a hunger-free community.

Implementing Action Items

As the coalition and action teams begin to implement steps outlined in the strategic plan and/or logic model, activities need to be documented and evaluated for long-term sustainability. Therefore, during implementation:

- Track and assess progress regularly, both in formal and informal ways.
- Create opportunities for sharing updates widely to promote accountability. Keep track of and celebrate small victories.
- Adjust the strategy as needed to sustain and strengthen the coalition. If something is not working for the community or coalition, do not be afraid to table plans and regroup.

- Be vigilant to prevent "mission creep" – straying away from the mission and strategic plan by chasing the special interests of a few members or donors.

To practice implementing and evaluating a coalition intervention, complete Exercises 8.1 and 8.2 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook.*

The HFCC Stages of Development and Level of Impact[114]

Hunger Free Community Coalitions evolve through a continuum of developmental stages. To support this journey, the Alliance to End Hunger has developed a simple and insightful framework outlining six stages of coalition development. Each stage includes a description to help coalitions identify where they currently stand and envision their path forward. This framework encourages thoughtful reflection and shared understanding among coalition members.

In addition to reviewing your landscape analysis, evaluating your coalition's interventions, and conducting regular self-assessments, revisiting this developmental continuum at regular intervals can help coalitions monitor progress and adapt to changing circumstances. Growth is rarely linear—coalitions may move between stages as they respond to new challenges and opportunities.

This handbook—along with its companion online course and workbook—is designed to support continued momentum toward the maturing and performing stages. Depending on the coalition's current stage, the content will resonate in different ways.

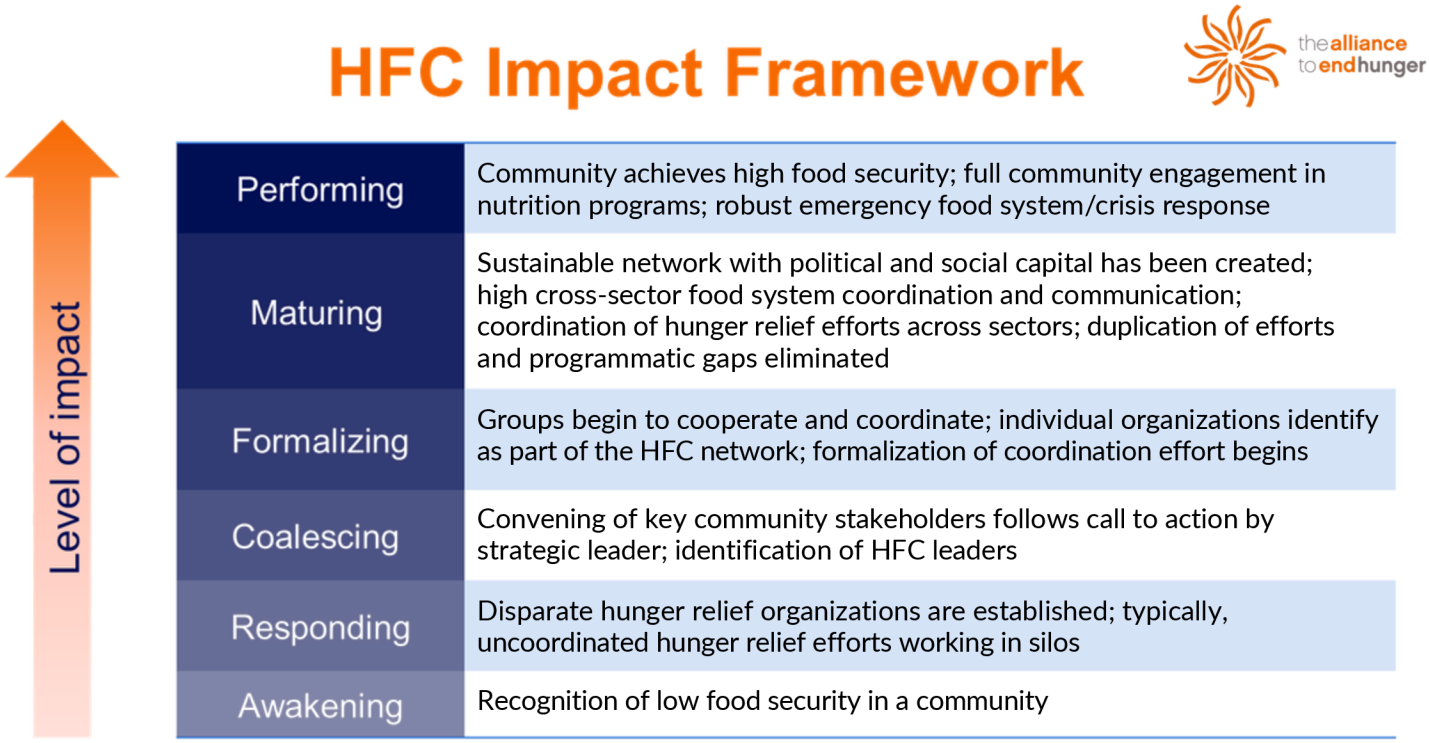

HFC Impact Framework
the alliance to end hunger
Level of impact
Performing
Community achieves high food security; full community engagement in nutrition programs; robust emergency food system/crisis response
Maturing
Sustainable network with political and social capital has been created; high cross-sector food system coordination and communication; coordination of hunger relief efforts across sectors; duplication of efforts and programmatic gaps eliminated
Formalizing
Groups begin to cooperate and coordinate; individual organizations identify as part of the HFC network; formalization of coordination effort begins
Coalescing
Convening of key community stakeholders follows call to action by strategic leader; identification of HFC leaders
Responding
Disparate hunger relief organizations are established; typically, uncoordinated hunger relief efforts working in silos
Awakening
Recognition of low food security in a community

Figure 13: Adapted from Delgado, M. & Bankston, A. (2025).[115]

Implementing Financial Sustainability

Ending hunger requires more than goodwill—it requires sustainable resources and a committed community. While volunteers, partnerships, and local knowledge form the heart of any HFCC, financial support is key to longevity and stability. Coalitions must secure funding to build infrastructure, compensate staff, support programs, host convenings, and ensure long-term impact.

While passion and partnership fuel early momentum, sustaining impact over time depends on a strategic approach to fundraising.

Whether applying for a federal grant or requesting a $250 sponsorship from a local grocery store, HFCCs should approach fundraising as a form of storytelling—one that connects people to possibility. The work to end hunger is compelling. To effectively raise funds for your coalition, craft a narrative that highlights your impact and strategically target the audiences most likely to resonate with your mission.

As in each of the implementation concepts discussed so far, when fundraising for your coalition, it is important to continue to be mindful and deliberate about the three pillars: multisectoral collaboration, shared power, and collective impact. Additionally, approach decisions related to fundraising with consensus-based decision making. Because many of the organizations involved in your coalition are also engaged in fundraising efforts, working together collaboratively can help you avoid conflict or competition with coalition member organizations when seeking funds, especially from local sources.

Fundraising for Project Versus Operational Support

Your HFCC will need to raise funds for a variety of needs, including those that directly support projects (such as supplies) and those that provide operational support (such as staff). Fundraising for project-related expenses may seem easier to secure, particularly when a variety of organizations and institutions are invested in the coalition and involved collaboratively in the project to be funded. Through partial funding and/or in-kind support by the coalition's member organizations, project investments can often be combined to meet the coalition's needs. Keep in mind that organizations and individuals are much more likely to provide funding or in-kind support for a particular project or activity that aligns with their mission or personal interests.

Most donors who are interested in funding food security initiatives will want to see their investment provide tangible items directly to those in need. However, data demonstrating the efficacy and potential growth of the coalition's work through an investment in paid staff can be compelling to potential funders. Coalitions can seek out funders who provide operational funds and recruit local investors with a commitment to ending hunger who may be more willing to support staff costs.

Donor Trends: 2025

Recent research underscores that transparency, trust, and community-centered efforts are key to donor engagement. Donors are more responsive when they understand and see how they are partners in solving hunger, especially when fundraisers clearly communicate impact and uphold ethical standards in their asks.[116] Studies published in 2025 also suggest nonprofit success is closely tied to the ability to communicate moral purpose and align messaging with values like fairness and care.[117]

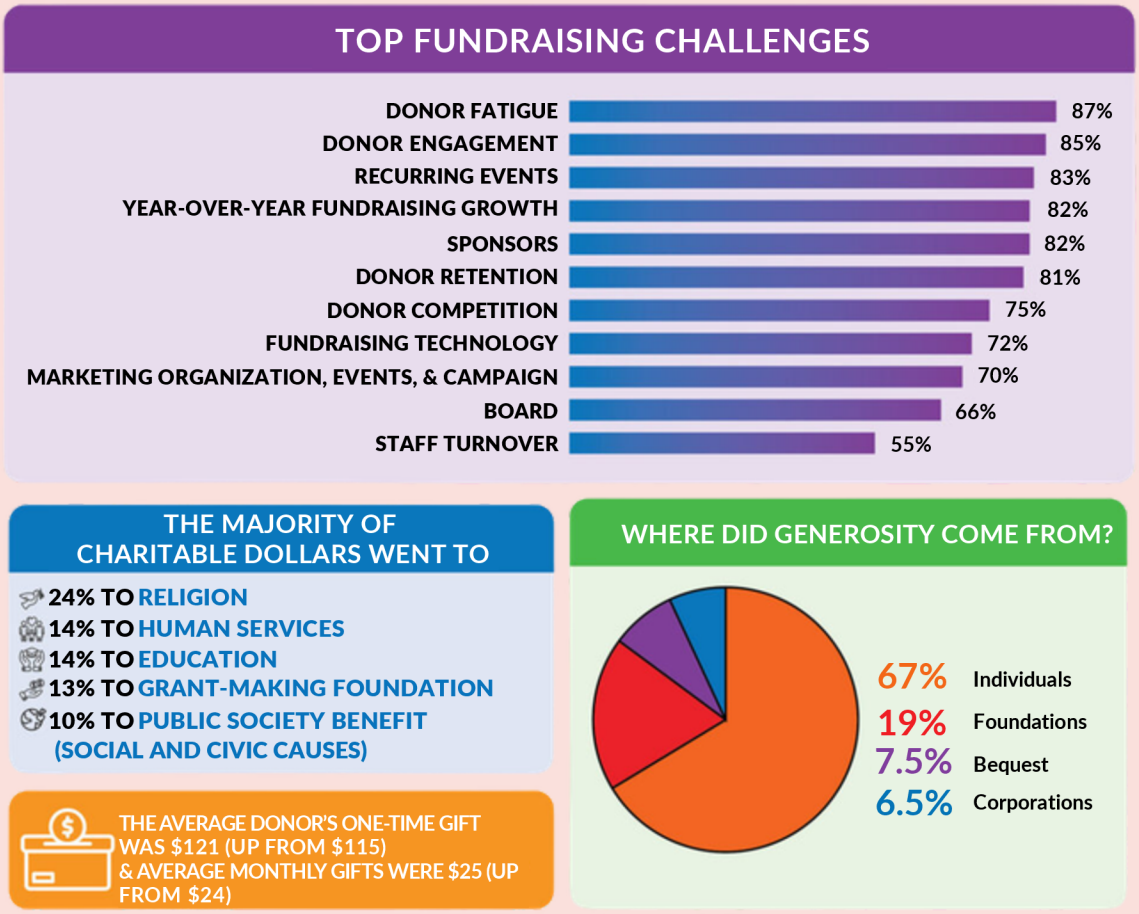

TOP FUNDRAISING CHALLENGES
DONOR FATIGUE 87%
DONOR ENGAGEMENT 85%
RECURRING EVENTS 83%
YEAR-OVER-YEAR FUNDRAISING GROWTH 82%
SPONSORS 82%
DONOR RETENTION 81%
DONOR COMPETITION 75%
FUNDRAISING TECHNOLOGY 72%
MARKETING ORGANIZATION, EVENTS, & CAMPAIGN 70%
BOARD 66%
STAFF TURNOVER 55%
THE MAJORITY OF CHARITABLE DOLLARS WENT TO
24% TO RELIGION
14% TO HUMAN SERVICES
14% TO EDUCATION
13% TO GRANT-MAKING FOUNDATION
10% TO PUBLIC SOCIETY BENEFIT (SOCIAL AND CIVIC CAUSES)
THE AVERAGE DONOR'S ONE-TIME GIFT WAS $121 (UP FROM $115) & AVERAGE MONTHLY GIFTS WERE $25 (UP FROM $24)
WHERE DID GENEROSITY COME FROM?
67% Individuals
19% Foundations
7.5% Bequest
6.5% Corporations

Figure 14: From Cerini, K.A. (2025).[118]

Strategic Fundraising Process

Case for Support

Before a coalition can go to a funder, they need to be equipped with their *case for support*. A case for support is essentially a short, standard outline of why the cause is a worthwhile investment. The case for support can be as simple as a memorized elevator pitch or as detailed as a full proposal for grant applications.

At its core, a case for support should contain the following:[119]

Case for Support
1
Mission and Vision: The foundation of your case for support
2
The Need Statement: Why your cause matters now
3
Impact and Outcomes: Showing donors their potential for change
4
Donor-Centric Language: Making the donor an active partner and hero
5
The Call to Action: Clear, specific, and actionable
6
Proof of Credibility: Building trust with donors
7
Visual Appeal: Making your case engaging and accessible

When creating your case for support, use data to showcase results. While data does not tell the story itself, data makes strong supportive material. For this reason, both qualitative and quantitative data are valuable, and a mix of both is ideal.

Concept Note

A *concept note* is another important tool to keep in your fundraising toolbox. A concept note is a two-page overview of your funding request drafted specifically for a funder. It should be short but intentional to give your funder enough detail to understand how their funds would impact your specific request. For example, you might send a concept note to a funder after a meeting where you discussed the request, so the funder will have a tangible document to refer back to as they consider your request or discuss it with other decision makers. As you write this document, consider the following:

- What does the funder want? What are their goals?
- What sources can I use to verify my case (testimonials, research/data, etc.)?
- How does my project align with the mission of the funder?

You concept note should include:

- A 1-2 paragraph overview of your organization's mission, vision, and history
- A summary of the need or challenge you are addressing
- An outline of the work you propose, framed as the solution and its potential impact
- A summary of your specific financial need

While a case for support and a concept note are similar, they play unique roles in fundraising. The case for support answers the question, "Why should the funder choose to support this coalition?" The concept note answers the question, "What will the coalition do with this financial support?"

A case for support should be a few paragraphs at most, while a concept note can be up to two pages. In some cases, you may choose to include your case for support in your concept note. Both documents are designed to help coalitions build relationships with funders and showcase why investing in a partnership will yield desirable results for both parties.

Using Online Tools for Fundraising

Emerging online tools and resources make it easier for HFCCs to undertake this work. Free platforms like Candid's fundraising planning toolkit (https://learning.candid.org/introduction-to-fundraising-planning-09-04-25/307180), GiveSmart's 2025 fundraising trends (https://www.givesmart.com/blog/forecasted-fundraising-trends-for-2025/), Nonprofit Resource Hub (https://nonprofitresourcehub.org), and Nonprofit Learning Lab (https://www.nonprofitlearninglab.org/resources) help coalitions plan, pitch, and engage supporters. Free and paid platforms like Givebutter (https://givebutter.com) and Donor Box (https://donorbox.org) help set up online fundraising with options to link to other networking platforms such as LinkedIn. The Nonprofit Trends Industry Report (https://online.flipbuilder.com/rmyw/aoiw/index.html#p=1) provides even more information.

Funding Sources

Successful HFCCs often blend multiple funding streams—including grants, individual donors, corporate sponsors, and in-kind support. Diversifying revenue sources not only protects coalitions from instability but also strengthens community buy-in.[120] Here are a few types of funding sources and ideas on how to engage them:

1. Individual Philanthropists

Individual philanthropists are individuals who can give at any level. In fact, research indicates that individual donors are the largest group supporting nonprofits.[121] To identify potential donors who may be interested in supporting your coalition, start with those whom individuals in the coalition know personally (remember: the ability for high-capacity giving is not a requirement). Then, build your network of individual donors through supporting organizations or current donors. Peer-to-peer fundraising campaigns are a successful way to build on existing networks. Also, personalized requests to each of your strongest supporters to connect the coalition to their networks can always be impactful. Either way, building an individual supporter base is a necessary and ongoing process for the life of the coalition.

2. Foundations

While foundations are often supportive of efforts in their communities, they also tend to be swamped with good requests for funding. Take the time to carefully understand a foundation's process and strategic priorities. Select the ones that align with the coalition's timeline and goals and reach out to discuss your ideas. Retain information on those who may be best for future conversations. Foundations will likely have an application process, but an initial introductory conversation can go a long way and help you put your best foot forward. If possible, find a mutual connection to introduce you, then visit with the contact in person. Approach the initial conversation with the goal of understanding the foundation's goals and getting to know them better without attempting to pitch a funding idea. You want the contact to know you are committed to working alongside them—whether or not they choose to fund you—because you are united by a shared vision.

3. Corporations and Community Organizations

Corporations and community organizations, like community banks or Rotary clubs, can often be intimidating to approach, but they can also be a vital resource and funding partner. Like foundations, these entities are typically overwhelmed with good requests, so be creative in your suggestions for developing a potential relationship. In addition to making personal connections, consider alternative ways they could support the coalition's work by leveraging their strengths. Perhaps they have employees seeking to volunteer their time or expertise, equipment they plan to replace, or excess food products they could donate. An ideal partnership is creative, generates good attention from the community, and aligns with their strategic priorities.

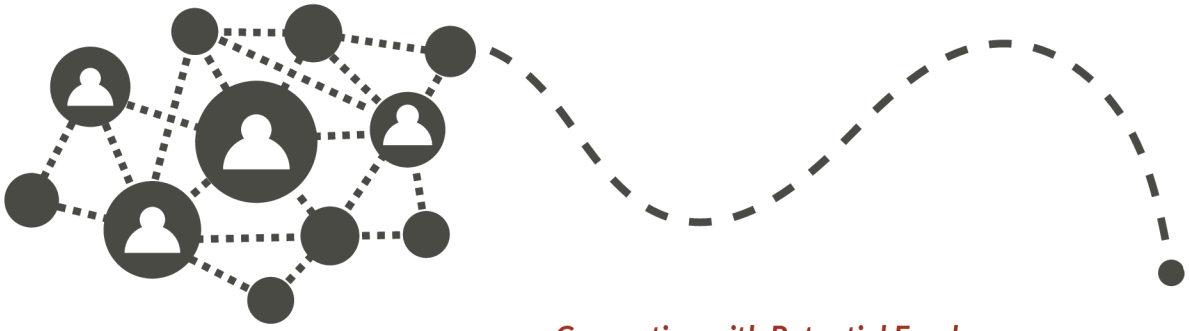
Sponsorships to cover costs associated with events, marketing, and programming are a great way to get local organizations and businesses involved in contributing to the coalition's work in a meaningful way. With a sponsorship, the organization providing funds or direct payment for a service can have their logo displayed or special recognition in exchange for their contribution.

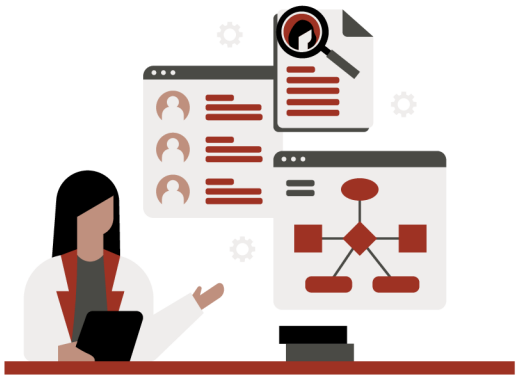
To get started on developing your coalition's fundraising strategy, complete Exercises 8.3 and 8.4 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*.

Finding Funders in Person and Online

Once you identify your ideal audience, consider these three ways to find funders:

1. *Networking*: Write a list of trusted partner organizations you could provide your pitch to and ask who to contact. Don't be afraid to ask your current funders this same question; they want to see your projects grow as much as you do!
2. *Foundation Support Entities*: Texas Rural Funders, Philanthropy Southwest, Methodist Healthcare Ministries, and other similar organizations offer databases of grant opportunities, lists of funding entities, and similar resources that can be used to find new funding. Explore these and search for other similar organizations.
3. *Search Engines*: Write a list of key words to use in search engines like grants.gov, Candid, or even Google. Be specific. Fortunately, you already have a case for support that can help you identify key terms!





Connecting with Potential Funders

Once your concept note is ready, you have identified potential funders, and you are ready to make a pitch, do not wait to connect. Whether or not a funder has an open grant opportunity or is requesting proposals for funding, you can still begin partnership discussions. Find out the funder's preferred contact method, or even better, ask a mutual connection, and request a conversation. Discuss what you noticed that identified them as a good fit and ask them for their feedback on your concept. If they like it enough, it could open doors for funding. If they want to know more, you will get valuable feedback on improving your pitch.

Dallas Coalition for Hunger Solutions

Case Study

The Dallas Coalition for Hunger Solutions initially started with the assistance of an AmeriCorps VISTA. To create longer-term sustainability the coalition's backbone organization, the Dallas regional office of the Baylor Collaborative, applied to the United Way of Metropolitan Dallas for a Community Impact grant to support the coalition's work. Although hunger was not one of the United Way's funded impact areas, the coalition successfully made the case that increasing access to healthy food was a key element in tackling obesity, one of the United Way's health goals. As a result, the coalition received a three-year grant which provided for a permanent coalition coordinator position to support the work of the coalition's leadership team and five action teams. The Dallas Coalition has successfully renewed the grant every three years.

Tom Green County Hunger Coalition

Case Study

The Tom Green County Hunger Coalition has been very successful in securing financial and in-kind support from participating congregations and community organizations, particularly for their signature project, the Kids Eat Free summer meal program. Kids Eat Free provides thousands of meals to children each summer. The coalition received an initial gift from Crockett Bank of $10,000 for seed money to start Kids Eat Free in 2010 and another grant from the bank in 2011. Kids Eat Free was also named as the recipient of proceeds from the semi-annual concert of the San Angelo Chamber Singers, with receipts over $1,000.

Conclusion

The strategies outlined in this chapter are designed to help you stay grounded in data, driven by community voices, and focused on long-term sustainability. As you move forward, remember that implementation is not a one-time event but an ongoing process of learning, adapting, and growing. With a clear structure, shared leadership, a commitment to continuous evaluation, and diversified funding, your coalition is well-positioned to create lasting impact and build a hunger-free future for your community.

Take a few moments to reflect and jot down any final thoughts when you complete Exercise 8.5 in *The Hunger Free Community Coalition Workbook: A Companion Tool to The Handbook*.

Final Conclusion: A Call to Collective Commitment

As this handbook goes to print in 2025, the United States is experiencing some of the highest rates of food insecurity since the Great Recession. In 2023, 18 million households nationwide struggled to access adequate food—an urgent reminder hunger is a present and persistent reality touching the lives of children, working families, and adults in every community.[122] This calls for collective action to support the wellbeing of our neighbors.

Despite the scale of this crisis, we are not without hope, nor are we without tools to make a difference. Hunger in the U.S. is not caused by a lack of food, but by disconnection, inequality, and the absence of a coordinated response. That means it is a problem we can solve.

Across the country, communities are rising to this challenge by forming Hunger Free Community Coalitions—powerful partnerships that show what is possible when diverse sectors unite around a shared purpose.

This handbook offers a roadmap shaped by more than sixteen years of fieldwork, research, and lived experience. It provides definitions, frameworks, activities, and real-world examples to support communities in the complex but achievable work of building and sustaining effective coalitions.

Ultimately, however, success depends not on the pages of this guide—but on the people holding it.

Ending hunger is not the responsibility of one person, one organization, or one sector. It is the collective responsibility of all of us. It will take creativity, humility, shared power, and sustained commitment. But it is possible.

As Dr. Jeremy Everett reminds us: “We do not have a food shortage in this country. We have a justice shortage.”

Let this be the generation that changes that. Let us build coalitions not only to address food insecurity—but to transform the systems that cause it. Together, we can create communities where everyone has consistent access to the food they need to live with dignity, health, and opportunity.

APPENDICES

A - E

APPENDIX A

FEDERAL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Nutrition Assistance Programs

FMNP – WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
Eligible WIC participants are issued FMNP coupons in addition to their regular WIC benefits. These coupons can be used to buy eligible foods from farmers, farmers' markets or roadside stands that have been approved by the state agency to accept FMNP coupons.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/fmnp/wic-farmers-market-nutrition-program

SFMNP – Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
This program is designed to provide low-income seniors with access to locally grown fruits, vegetables, honey and herbs; increase the domestic consumption of agricultural commodities through farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agricultural programs; and aid in the development of new and additional farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agricultural programs.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp/senior-farmers-market-nutrition-program

SNAP – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SNAP provides food benefits to low-income families to supplement their grocery budget so they can afford nutritious food essential to health and well-being.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program

WIC – Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
WIC aims to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic

NAP - Nutrition Assistance Program
The Nutrition Assistance Program provides block grants for low-income households in the U.S. territories of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rice, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marina Islands. These block grants are in lieu of SNAP and provided by Congress's authorization of funds.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/nap/nutrition-assistance-program-block-grants

Food Distribution and Emergency Assistance Programs

CSFP – Commodity Supplemental Food Program

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) works to improve the health of low-income persons at least 60 years of age by supplementing their diets with nutritious USDA Foods. USDA distributes both food and administrative funds to participating states and Indian Tribal Organizations to operate CSFP.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/csfp/commodity-supplemental-food-program

FDPIR – The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) provides USDA Foods to income-eligible households living on Indian reservations and to Native American households residing in designated areas near reservations or in Oklahoma. USDA distributes both food and administrative funds to participating Indian Tribal Organizations and state agencies to operate FDPIR.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/fdpir/food-distribution-program-indian-reservations

TEFAP – The Emergency Food Assistance Program

The Emergency Food Assistance Program is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of people with low income by providing them with emergency food assistance at no cost. USDA provides 100 percent American-grown USDA Foods and administrative funds to states to operate TEFAP.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/emergency-food-assistance-program

Disaster Assistance

The Federal Nutrition Service responds to active disasters by providing disaster nutrition assistance to states in need.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster

Child Nutrition Programs

CACFP – Child and Adult Care Food Program

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federal program that provides reimbursements for nutritious meals and snacks to eligible children and adults who are enrolled for care at participating childcare centers, day care homes, and adult day care centers. CACFP also provides reimbursements for meals served to children and youth participating in afterschool care programs, children residing in emergency shelters, and adults over the age of 60 or living with a disability and enrolled in day care facilities.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp

FFVP – Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) introduces elementary school children to a variety of produce they otherwise might not have the opportunity to sample. FFVP is consistent with and supports the Health and Medicine Division (HMD) of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's recommendations to provide healthier snack choices in schools.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/ffvp/fresh-fruit-and-vegetable-program

NSLP – National School Lunch Program
The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential childcare institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/nslp

SBP – School Breakfast Program
The School Breakfast Program provides reimbursement to states to operate nonprofit breakfast programs in schools and residential childcare institutions. The Food and Nutrition Service administers the SBP at the federal level. State education agencies administer the SBP at the state level, and local school food authorities operate the program in schools.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/sbp/school-breakfast-program

Special Milk Program
The Special Milk Program provides milk to schools and childcare institutions that do not participate in other federal meal service programs. Similar to other federal meal service programs, schools are reimbursed for the milk they serve.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/smp/special-milk-program

Summer Meals – Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
Through Summer Meals, children of all ages can eat meals and snacks during the summer at no cost at schools, parks, and other neighborhood locations. Summer Meals may have different names based on location, but the benefit is the same: meals for children and teens, and opportunities to participate in fun activities. This program is a federally funded, state-administered program.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/summer/sunmeals

Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (Summer EBT)
Branded as SUN Bucks in 2024, Summer EBT provides summer grocery benefits to eligible children and is available across most of the U.S. When states opt into this program, families with eligible school-aged children can get $120 per child to buy groceries during the summer. These benefits may be referred to as Summer EBT or SUN Bucks, depending on your state. Families can receive Summer EBT in addition to other benefits like SNAP and WIC, and children can continue to enjoy free Summer Meals from local meal sites serving congregate or non-congregate meals.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/summer/sunbucks

Additional Federal Nutrition Programs

Afterschool Snack Service

The Afterschool Snack Service is a component of the National School Lunch Program and fills the afternoon hunger gap for children in school. The service offers cash reimbursement to help school food authorities provide nutritional boosts to children enrolled in afterschool activities. Schools who participate agree to provide one snack a day to children who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/afterschool-snacks

FASLP – Food & Agriculture Services Learning Program

The Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program was established to increase knowledge of agriculture, to improve the nutritional health of children, and to bring together stakeholders from diverse food system sectors to increase capacity for food, garden, and nutrition education. This nutrition education can be hosted in school cafeterias or classrooms and encourages community engagement between farms and school systems.
See: https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/programs/food-agriculture-service-learning-program-faslp

GusNIP – Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive

The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program provides funding for projects providing incentives to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by low-income participating households. Funding can be for pilot projects, standard projects, or large-scale projects, and comes in three grant types: as nutrition incentives, as produce prescriptions, and as cooperative agreements.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/gusnip-grant-program

HFFI – Healthy Food Financing Initiative

The Healthy Food Financing Initiative is a public-private partnership between the government, food retailers, and food retail supply chain enterprises to overcome the higher costs and initial barriers experienced when trying to enter underserved areas. A community development financial institution, the Reinvestment Fund, works with partners, retailers, and intermediaries on behalf of USDA Rural Development by providing financial and technical assistance to this end.
See: https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/initiatives/healthy-food-financing-initiative

The Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program

The Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program helps child nutrition program operators incorporate local foods in the NSLP, Summer Meals, the CACFP, and all other associated programs. In addition, USDA staff work with tribal communities by promoting food sovereignty and the integration of traditional food into tribal meal programs.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/farm-to-school

RMP – Restaurant Meals Program

The Restaurant Meals Program is a program through SNAP which allows eligible participants to buy prepared meals at restaurants using their SNAP benefits. This program is opted into by the state, and to be eligible, participants must be over the age of 60, disabled, homeless, or a spouse of a SNAP client who is eligible for RMP.

See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer/restaurant-meals-program

APPENDIX B

COMMON LANGUAGE FOR HUNGER FREE COMMUNITY COALITION DEVELOPMENT

No one sector can end hunger alone. Efforts to improve food insecurity require a response exceeding the capabilities and resources of any one individual or organization. However, even when a diverse constellation of stakeholders joins together to strengthen food security, their efforts often remain siloed, each working on autonomous projects independently funded, designed, and evaluated for success.

Hunger Free Community Coalitions leverage the collective impact of all parties in a community or region–including the public and private sectors, humanitarian and faith-based organizations, and academia–allowing families and individuals access to resources to become more food and nutrition secure. By bringing everyone to the same table, communities can act to assess the local food system, identify resources and gaps, make decisions for change, and implement action plans to ensure their neighbors have access to healthy food.

Highly effective coalitions seek to advance food security collaboratively. The Baylor Collaborative's HFCC approach is based on three key pillars: multisectoral collaboration, shared power, and collective impact. These pillars serve as the foundation from which a healthy coalition can develop effective solutions, strengthening community resilience and reducing food security at its roots.

The Baylor Collaborative's Three Pillars of the HFCC Approach:

1. Multisectoral Collaboration
2. Shared Power
3. Collective Impact

The Baylor Collaborative's Five Phases of Coalition Formation:

Phase 1: Establishing a Shared Vision
Phase 2: Understanding Your Community and Resources
Phase 3: Convening a Coalition
Phase 4: Creating a Multisectoral Strategic Plan
Phase 5: Implementing the Plan

The HFCC Stages of Development and Level of Impact (Source: Alliance to End Hunger):

Performing: Community achieves high food security; full community engagement in nutrition programs; robust emergency food system/crisis response

Maturing: Sustainable network with political and social capital has been created; high cross-sector food system coordination and communication; coordination of hunger relief efforts across sectors; duplication of efforts and programmatic gaps eliminated

Formalizing: Groups begin to cooperate and coordinate; individual organizations identify as part of the HFC network; formalization of coordination effort begins

Coalescing: Convening of key community stakeholders follows call to action by strategic leader; identification of HFC leaders

Responding: Disparate hunger relief organizations are established; typically, uncoordinated hunger relief efforts working in silos

Awakening: Recognition of low food security in a community

APPENDIX C

RESOURCES FOR HUNGER FREE COMMUNITIES

The Baylor Collaborative houses a number of current resources for Hunger Free Community Coalitions on its website. For more information, visit https://hungerandpoverty.web.baylor.edu.

Reach Out to the Baylor Collaborative
The Baylor Collaborative's Hunger Free Community Accelerator team provides guidance and support to newly forming and growing coalitions. To find out more, email collaborative@baylor.edu.

Network of Hunger Free Community Coalitions
The Baylor Collaborative encourages Hunger Free Community Coalitions to join its network and become part of the Alliance to End Hunger.
See: https://hungerandpoverty.web.baylor.edu/hfca or email collaborative@baylor.edu.

Hunger Data Lab
The Baylor Collaborative's Hunger Data Lab is free to use and easy to access. The Hunger Data Lab makes data accessible and understandable for communities, practitioners, advocates, policymakers, and researchers. With these dashboards, your coalition can make informed, data-driven decisions about the work you can lead to end hunger in your community.
See: https://hungerandpoverty.web.baylor.edu/hungerdatalab/dashboards

Hunger Free Communities Certificate Program
Designed for anyone interested in building a Hunger Free Community Coalition, the *Hunger Free Communities Certificate Course*, offered in partnership with Baylor University's Extended Learning, guides participants through the five-phase design and formation process. Participants can work at their own pace while mastering the online content through interactive exercises and video presentations from experts in the field. Upon finishing the course, participants receive a Certificate of Completion from Baylor University.
See: https://hungerandpoverty.web.baylor.edu/hfca/certificate.

Hunger Free Communities Two-Year Intensive for Community Leadership Councils
The Baylor Collaborative's HFCC 2-Year Training Program is a two-year, six-element training intensive. During the two-year intensive, Baylor Collaborative experts work closely with participants one-on-one to guide them through:

- Forming a Community Leadership Council
- Completing the online Hunger Free Communities Certificate Course

- Attending the Baylor Collaborative's Together at the Table Summit at Baylor University
- Participating in a Food Security Policy Workshop in Washington, D.C.
- Organizing a Hunger Free Community Coalition launch event
- Developing a coalition through ongoing, personalized coaching support

These elements cover the five phases of creating a coalition, stewarding stakeholder and landscape analysis, and in-depth policy training. The second year, participants build their coalition, supported by coaching provided by the Baylor Collaborative's experts. Find out more about the HFCC 2-Year Training Program at https://hungerandpoverty.web.baylor.edu/hfca/trainingprogram.

APPENDIX D

DATA TOOLS

Explore Census Data
This resource from the US Census provides statistics on demographic categories by location. This is best used when searching for poverty rates in your county by age, race, etc.
See: https://data.census.gov/

Kids Count Data
As a one-stop-shop, Kids Count Data center gathers data from several sources, all with the purpose of tracking children's well-being. It tracks several indicators including demographics, economic wellbeing, education, family and community, health, and safety.
See: https://datacenter.aecf.org/#USA/1/0

Map the Meal Gap
This resource from Feeding America provides food insecurity statistics. This resource is best used to find food insecurity rates for your state, your county, or broken down by specific demographic categories.
See: https://map.feedingamerica.org/

SNAP Data Tables
This data from the United States Department of Agriculture's Food & Nutrition Service shows national and state level data for participation in SNAP. This could be useful in seeing trends over the years both nationally and for your state.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap

SNAP in Texas
This resource from the Health and Human Services Department of Texas has data showing SNAP enrollment by county for each month and is helpful in looking at how SNAP is used in your community. In this dataset, "eligible individuals" refers only to people who have both signed up for and have been approved to receive SNAP benefits. SNAP Cases refers to those households who have received and used their SNAP benefits in that month.
See: https://www.hhs.texas.gov/about/records-statistics/data-statistics/supplemental-nutritional-assistance-program-snap-statistics

SNAP Retail Data
Search by zip code to learn what stores accept SNAP in your area. This is useful to see if and where people in your community are able to redeem their SNAP dollars. This resource is also helpful for determining locations of food deserts.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer-locator

Social Services Search Engine

Find Help allows users to search for food, health, housing, and employment programs based on their postal code. Find Help simplifies the search and application process for social services. The app collects information on federal, state, county, city, neighborhood, and nonprofit programs all in one place. This is helpful when you are reviewing what resources and assets may already be available in your community.

See: https://www.findhelp.org/

TexasSchools.Gov

This resource provides school level data in a user-friendly way, allowing users to gain insight into some of the community's challenges. Key data includes the percentage of children eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. This information is helpful when looking at how food insecurity rates correspond to individual schools, the district, and academic performance.

See: https://txschools.gov/?lng=en

Additionally, see: https://www.austinisd.org/cda/state-accountability/faqs

APPENDIX E

COMMUNITY MAPPING TOOLS

Capacity Builder
This tool maps key landmarks in a community and overlays them with measures of food insecurity.
See: https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/capacitybuilder

Food Desert Locator
This site provides tools that enable coalitions to do the following:

1. Create maps showing food access indicators by census tract using different measures and indicators of supermarket accessibility;
2. View indicators of food access for selected subpopulations; and
3. Download census-tract-level data on food access measures.
   See: https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas

PolicyMap
PolicyMap is a web-based Geographic Information System (GIS). It captures data about geographic regions through custom demographic maps, tables, and reports. Available data includes demographics, home sale statistics, health data, mortgage trends, school performance scores and labor data such as unemployment, crime statistics, etc. This tool allows you to generate detailed demographic reports of specific cities, zip codes, counties, and census tracts.

Most features are available with the public (non-subscription based) version, and login information is not required.
See: https://www.policymap.com/

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